Pauline Frommer's

WASHINGTON, D.C.

SPEND LESS SEE MORE™

1st Edition

by Jim Yenckel

Series Editor: Pauline Frommer

BICENTENNIAL 1807 WILEY 2007 BICENTENNIAL

Wiley Publishing, Inc.

VISIT…

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Published by:

Wiley Publishing, Inc.
111 River St.
Hoboken, NJ 07030-5774

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ISBN: 978-0-470-08296-6

Editor: Marc Nadeau
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Anniversary Logo Design: Richard Pacifico
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Production by Wiley Indianapolis Composition Services

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Manufactured in the United States of America

5 4 3 2 1

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About the Author

Jim Yenckel was a writer and editor for the *Washington Post* for 33 years. For 16 years, he was *The Post*'s chief travel reporter, writing a weekly advice column distributed over the *Los Angeles Times/Washington Post News Service* wire. Subsequently, he has appeared in *Arthur Frommer's Budget Travel* magazine, *Newsweek, Preservation, Washingtonian Magazine,* and *NARFE,* a magazine for federal employees. He also has written for the *Los Angeles Times, Chicago Tribune, Newsday, Cleveland Plain Dealer, Denver Post, Hartford Courant,* and other newspapers. He currently writes a weekly travel column for the *Washington Examiner* and the *Baltimore Examiner,* and he can be heard monthly on WAMU-FM, a National Public Radio outlet in Washington. He received the Traveler's Advocate Award of the American Society of Travel Agents and a Silver Lowell Thomas Award from the Society of American Travel Writers Foundation. His guidebook to the Mid-Atlantic Region earned him the Travel Writer of the Year Award from the State of Maryland. Born in Omaha, he attended school in Nebraska and California. He is a graduate in Spanish American history from the University of California at Berkeley, where he served a term as editor-in-chief of the *Daily Californian,* the student newspaper. After college, he received a fellowship from the Inter-American Press Association for a year's study at the University of Chile in Santiago. While in Santiago, he served as managing editor of the *South Pacific Mail,* a weekly English-language newspaper. He has traveled in more than 80 countries and all 50 states. After an assignment as *The Post*'s night foreign editor, he obtained a year's leave of absence in 1972 and backpacked solo around the world mostly by bus and train, visiting 30 countries in Europe and Asia. Earlier in his career, he circled the United States on a 99-day/$99 Greyhound Bus pass. His most recent adventure, to celebrate the conclusion of this guide, was to hike the rigorous 21-mile rim-to-rim trail in Grand Canyon National Park. He lives in Washington with his wife Sandy, who is also an avid traveler.

An Invitation to the Reader

In researching this book, we discovered many wonderful places—hotels, restaurants, shops, and more. We're sure you'll find others. Please tell us about them, so we can share the information with your fellow travelers in upcoming editions. If you were disappointed with a recommendation, we'd love to know that, too. Please write to:

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An Additional Note

Please be advised that travel information is subject to change at any time—and this is especially true of prices. We therefore suggest that you write or call ahead for confirmation when making your travel plans. The authors, editors, and publisher cannot be held responsible for the experiences of readers while traveling. Your safety is important to us, however, so we encourage you to stay alert and be aware of your surroundings. Keep a close eye on cameras, purses, and wallets, all favorite targets of thieves and pickpockets.

Star Ratings, Icons & Abbreviations

Every restaurant, hotel and attraction is rated with stars , indicating our opinion of that facility's desirability; this relates not to price, but to the value you receive for the price you pay. The stars mean:

No stars: Good
Very good
Great
Outstanding! A must!

Accommodations within each neighborhood are listed in ascending order of cost, starting with the cheapest and increasing to the occasional "splurge." Each hotel review is preceded by one, two, three or four dollar signs, indicating the price range per double room. Restaurants work on a similar system, with dollar signs indicating the price range per three-course meal.

Accommodations		**Dining**	
$	Up to $100/night	**$**	Meals for $7 or less
$$	$101–$135	**$$**	$8–$12
$$$	$136–$175	**$$$**	$13–$17
$$$$	$176 and up	**$$$$**	$18 and up

In addition, we've included a kids icon to denote attractions, restaurants, and lodgings that are particularly child friendly.

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- Online updates of our most popular guidebooks
- Vacation sweepstakes and contest giveaways
- Newsletters highlighting the hottest travel trends
- Online travel message boards with featured travel discussions

A Note from Pauline

I started traveling with my guidebook-writing parents, Arthur Frommer and Hope Arthur, when I was just four months old. To avoid lugging around a crib, they would simply swaddle me and stick me in an open drawer for the night. For half of my childhood, my home was a succession of hotels and B&Bs throughout Europe, as we dashed around every year to update *Europe on $5 a Day* (and then $10 a day, and then $20. . .).

We always traveled on a budget, staying at the Mom-and-Pop joints Dad featured in the guide, getting around by public transportation, eating where the locals ate. And that's still the way I travel today, because I learned—from the master—that these types of vacations not only save you money, but give you a richer, deeper experience of the culture. You spend time in local neighborhoods and you meet and talk with the people who live there. For me, making friends and having meaningful exchanges is always the highlight of my trip—and the main reason I decided to become a travel writer and editor as well.

I conceived these books as budget guides for the next generation. They have all the outspoken commentary and detailed pricing information you've come to expect from the Frommer's guides, but they take bargain hunting into the 21st century, with more information on how you can effectively use the Internet to save money. Most importantly, we stress the availability of "alternative accommodations" not simply to save you money but to give you a more authentic experience in the places you visit.

In this Washington, D.C. book, for example, we'll tell you about homestays in Victorian townhouses where you'll pay just $85 per night (p. 33); quaint guesthouses in authentic Washington neighborhoods, where the gatherings at breakfast can be as fun as a dinner party with friends (and which can cost as little as $75 per night); and large apartment rentals, with enough room for the whole family (which cost a fraction of what you'd pay in a faceless hotel).

The chapter on "The Other Washington" immerses you in the life that residents enjoy: the lectures they attend, the work they do, the high-powered social events they crowd. Page through this guide and you'll find information on dance classes attended by congressional aides getting ready for their first formal balls (p. 144); seminars for would-be activists, which will introduce you to a highly motivated, fascinating group of people (p. 147); photo safaris led by local photojournalists, that will uncover the hidden nooks of the city (as well as teach you how to get that difficult shot, p. 148); among other experiences.

The result, I hope, is a valuable new addition to the world of guidebooks. Please let me know how we've done! I encourage you to e-mail me at editor@frommers.com or write me care of Frommer's, 111 River Street, Hoboken, NJ, 07030.

Happy traveling!

Pauline Frommer

1 Washington Is My Home

An introduction to this guide

IT'S THE PRESIDENT, MAYBE. OR IT COULD BE A VISITING MINISTER OR A queen or even a sultan. The tell-tale signs of an approaching motorcade bearing a VIP appear suddenly. Metropolitan police squad cars arrive, blocking all traffic onto the motorcade route. In the distance, sirens scream and grow louder as they approach. First comes a roaring phalanx of motorcycle cops, a dozen of them, waving jay walkers back onto the curb. Moving swiftly, a pursuing parade of black limousines and Secret Service–toting SUVs—12 or 15 vehicles—sweeps past, warning lights flashing. Small flags on one or two limos whip in frenzy. Finally, a big white city ambulance brings up the rear, racing to keep up. The ambulance is the key; it almost always means the President is on the move. And then, in 30 seconds, the show is over—at least on the block where you are standing.

These motorcades, brief eruptions of noise and action, are a Washington fact of life. They happen every day; you will probably witness one. Some are not quite so intrusive; lesser dignitaries don't receive as much protection. To a delayed motorist, they are a nuisance. But they are one reason I've made Washington my home for most of my work life. They bespeak the excitement of living in the nation's capital, where national and world leaders make the decisions affecting not only Americans but nearly everyone on the globe. Not always the right decisions, let me add, but important ones good or bad.

Many of us in the city suffer from Potomac Fever, a recognized malady of the mind and heart. We come here to take a job, and then we are infected. We can't leave; so much is going on all the time we fear we would be bored anywhere else. My wife Sandy and I took jobs in the city in our 20s, she from Michigan and I from Nebraska by way of California. We expect to remain for the rest of our lives.

So what keeps us here?

For one, it's the thrill we get from being in a place where things happen. My wife is an executive with an insurance lobbying association; I was a writer and editor with the *Washington Post.* As such we have worked on the fringes of important happenings, and we became addicted. It affects lots of senators and representatives who never go home either. But this is only part of our love affair with Washington.

We remain because it's a beautiful place, perhaps the loveliest city in America, and getting more beautiful every year. The National Mall, site of so many elegant marble monuments and memorials, is a unique treasure. You don't have to step into any of its museums to experience its spirit-boosting beauty. This is a city of parks, grand and small, and of flowering trees and shrubs and lush green lawns. In spring, a kaleidoscope of blooms carpets the city. Come summer, a thick

canopy of shade trees shields us from some of the sun's hot sting. And when the leaves turn in fall, they treat us to a grand foliage display.

Washington is a diverse community—multiracial, cosmopolitan, and tolerant. Well, maybe not quite so diverse; we vote almost solidly Democratic year after year. Republicans claim the White House and both branches of the federal legislature from time to time; Democrats have a lock on the District Building, our City Hall. You are likely to see foreign visitors, students, or temporary residents in the dress of their homeland—often along Embassy Row. This, too, is part of the city's charm.

Sandy and I do not keep a TV set. Who has time to watch? There are so many after-hour things to do in Washington, and so many are free: ever-changing museum shows, chamber concerts, lectures, poetry readings, political demonstrations, volunteer opportunities, and more. Live theater is a really big deal, often premiering works of America's up-and-coming playwrights. The National Symphony Orchestra is one of the country's best; so is the Washington National Opera, headed by renowned tenor Placido Domingo. The cafe and club scenes are hot.

SIGHTS YOU GOTTA SEE

The grand view of the National Mall from the west steps of the U.S. Capitol as you begin an escorted tour of the Capitol. It's my favorite view in the city, a more impressive sight than the rather unfocused vista from atop the Washington Monument. See p. 139.

The Lincoln Memorial is Washington's most famous and arguably most cherished memorial (p. 99). Visit the museum to learn about the major civil rights events that have taken place on its steps—among them the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream" speech. Find a seat on those very steps and enjoy the sweeping view from the opposite end of the National Mall—second only to the view from the Capitol.

Ginevra de' Benci in the National Gallery of Art is the only painting in the United States by Leonardo da Vinci. A small gem, it's the portrait of a lovely young woman of 15th-century Florence. After seeing it, indulge in the museum's other riches, including its Impressionist galleries. See p. 104.

The Washington National Cathedral. A Gothic masterpiece, it looks like something out of 14th-century England. The sixth largest cathedral in the world, it boasts something none of the larger ones do. High on the front facade is the sculpted head of Darth Vador, the *Star Wars* villain, who does service as one of the cathedral's very functional gargoyles. See p. 131.

The Korean War Veterans Memorial is overshadowed by the nearby Vietnam Veterans Memorial. But in a more graphic way, it makes a similarly compelling statement about the tragedy of war. The Vietnam memorial is an artistic masterwork—a simple, eloquent tribute to the dead; the Korean memorial, also honoring the war dead, is a punch in the gut. See p. 110.

THINGS YOU GOTTA DO

Sit in on a session of Congress, either the Senate or the House, and see America's legislators in action. Sometimes little is happening on the floor; occasionally fireworks go off. See p. 94.

Indulge your spirit of adventure at the Smithsonian Institution's National Air and Space Museum. There's no comparable museum of space flight anywhere else. Be sure to touch the **Moon Rock,** a piece of the moon brought back by the astronauts. See p. 105.

Circle the White House to see it from the front and back. Although you've seen the White House on the evening news, this is your chance for a close-up look. My guess is that it will appear more impressive than you imagined. See p. 85.

Browse the chic boutiques and stroll the streets of historic Georgetown. Busy throughout the week, the sidewalks spill over with traffic on Saturday and Sunday. It becomes almost a party scene, where locals show up to see and be seen. This is the preferred neighborhood of Washington's wealthier Cabinet members, senators (John Kerry of Massachusetts), representatives, and prominent journalists, such as the *Washington Post*'s Ben Bradlee and Sally Quinn. Keep an eye out for them. See p. 219 for shopping, p. 191 for a walking tour.

DINING FOR EVERY TASTE

Sample the new trend in Washington dining—called "small plates," *tapas* (from Spain) or *mezze* (of North African/Mediterranean origin). No matter the name, they are indeed a selection of small, very tasty dishes. Depending on your appetite, each diner orders two or three and shares. The best of these restaurants is **Zaytinya** (p. 67) which plucks recipes and ingredients from across the Mediterranean.

Go **ethnic** at the city's wonderful array of restaurants and cafes featuring cuisines from around the world. The savory stews of Ethiopia are served up on 18th Street in Adams Morgan, often dubbed "Little Ethiopia," and in the developing U Street Corridor. Try one of these African feasts at either **Dukem** (p. 74) or **Etete** (p. 73). You'll also find world class German, Malaysian, Indian, Belgian, Turkish, and other foods, allowing your tongue to tour the planet, so to speak, without ever leaving Washington, D.C.

Sample home-cooked **soul food** in the church cafeteria in a primarily African-American neighborhood. For more than four decades, the **Saint's Paradise Cafeteria** (p. 80) has been serving up ultra-tasty, budget-priced plates of fried chicken, beef short ribs, pigs' feet, chitterlings, and corn bread every day of the week.

UNCOMMON LODGINGS

Many visitors put off their dream trips to Washington, D.C. for the simple reason that they don't think they can afford to go. The cost of accommodation usually takes the blame. Yet the reality is that the least expensive places to stay often

yield the most exciting visits. Many D.C. residents maintain spare basement apartments or rooms expressly for the purpose of renting them to visitors. Many are located in the same areas where the most popular hotels are found, but they usually cost much less. To learn all about these "alternative accommodations," go to p. 27.

If you want a more traditional option, try the hip, high-style **The Akwaaba Bed and Breakfast.** It'll be a big change after a history-filled day of sightseeing on the Mall. A fine example of the city's bed-and-breakfast inns, it features some of the largest and most attractive rooms to be found in the city. See p. 39.

Occupying a three-story red brick mansion, the 10-room **Embassy Circle Guest House** gives you a taste of luxurious living in one of the city's swankiest neighborhoods, but at an affordable price. Surrounded by embassies, and once owned by the government of Taiwan, it's a fine example of a type of lodging that may be unique to the city. See p. 38.

Even more affordable, but still quite cute, the Victorian **Kalorama Guest House** puts you in the heart of funky Adams Morgan, with its fun (and usually quite good) restaurants, bars, and clubs. You'll sleep surrounded by antiques, with the sepia-toned portraits of someone's relatives gazing down at you from the walls. See p. 33.

Statistical Washington

Founded in 1791, Washington covers 68 square miles. They were carved out of land donated to the federal government by the state of Maryland. The current official population numbers 582,049, according to the 2005 census. That census showed a heartening increase of 31,528 residents after a 56-year decline in population. In 1950, the population peaked at 802,178. The city is located in the heart of a Metropolitan area with a population, including Washington's, of 5.42 million.

The name Washington, of course, is to honor President George Washington. District of Columbia is a nod to Christopher Columbus. The "District" in the name refers to Washington's status as a Federal district, a unique designation created especially for the seat of government. It is not a state, so it is not entitled to two U.S. senators nor the one representative its population might otherwise claim.

The primary industry is the Federal government, followed by tourism. Trade associations, scrambling to influence national legislation, are another important industry. Washington is home to more of these lobbying organizations than any other U.S. city.

FINEST "OTHER" EXPERIENCES

Be a spectator or participant at a **demonstration or protest** on the National Mall. You can remain silent and undemonstrative, but if a march occurs while you are in town, see what it's about. You don't have to agree with the speakers; just listen for a while. If you're really gung ho about changing the world, you could attend a seminar for would-be activists. See p. 147.

Tour the **Mall by moonlight,** when the monuments and memorials are lighted and seem to possess a magical glow. National Park Service rangers are on duty nightly until midnight, but consider one of several escorted tour options—among them by bicycle or Segway. See p. 139.

Attend a concert or lecture at a **foreign embassy.** It's a great way to see the interior of some of the capital's elegant embassies, and you might get to shake hands with the ambassador. At the very least, you will learn something new about a foreign land and culture. See p. 153.

Join the legions of congressional aides preparing for the balls they might attend as part of their jobs at a festive **dance class.** It's a swell way to break the ice with locals and learn about some of the very old fashioned rituals of D.C. See p. 144.

2 Lay of the Land

The sometimes confusing geography of Washington, the city's diverse neighborhoods, and how to get around

WASHINGTON IS AN EXCEEDINGLY EASY CITY TO TOUR. I'M NOT SPINNING you here. Despite the crowds, the traffic, the complexities of traffic circles and diagonal avenues, you are not going to have a problem getting around this city. The major reason is that much of monumental Washington—what you want to see—is clustered on or near the National Mall. And nobody is going to get lost on the Mall. Much of it is open parkland with unimpeded vistas. Look east, and the U.S. Capitol commands your view. Look west, and the Washington Monument soars skyward. You couldn't ask for two more obvious beacons to keep you from going astray.

Even venturing into more distant neighborhoods is a breeze, provided you take public transportation. The subway, called Metrorail or (more commonly) the Metro, and public buses provide safe, clean, and reliable transportation to all but a handful of attractions cited in this guide.

You will encounter trouble—get confused, lost, or trapped in traffic—only if you insist on driving a car in Washington. Don't do it. Let me repeat. **DON'T DRIVE IN WASHINGTON.** Public parking is limited, and those of us who live here have already claimed these spaces. And private parking garages will shred your budget. Typically the first hour in downtown garages is $8 or $9. Daily parking rates easily can climb to $15 to $20. Daily or overnight parking fees at many city hotels are about the same. Use a rental car only for day trips recommended in Chapter 11, "Get Out of Town."

Okay, okay—you've got a car. On Saturday and Sunday mornings before the Smithsonian museums open (10am), you can find parking spaces paralleling the Mall on Independence Avenue SW between 3rd and 10th streets.

WASHINGTON'S LOGICAL STREET PLAN (AND WHY IT BAFFLES VISITING MOTORISTS)

Before there was a Washington, there was a plan. The credit goes to a French engineer by the name of Pierre L'Enfant (honored by a spacious L' Enfant Plaza just south of the Mall). George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and other leaders in the new American government put in their two cents' worth also.

L'Enfant conceived a grid system of numbered streets running from north to south. Alphabetical streets run from east to west. Quite simple, so far: 1st Street, 2nd Street, 3rd Street; A Street, B Street, C Street. But then, adding character

Security Measures Are a Fact of City Life

Since the tragedy of Sept. 11, 2001, much tighter security measures have been instituted throughout the city, primarily in local and federal government buildings and most museums. For sightseers, this means standing in airport-like security lines, stepping through a security machine, and—at the very least—having all purses and bags searched at many major attractions on the National Mall and elsewhere.

The list includes the White House and the White House Visitor Center, the U.S. Capitol and Senate and House office buildings, the Supreme Court of the United States, the Library of Congress, elevator access to the top of the Washington Monument, the National Archives, the Smithsonian Institution museums, the National Gallery of Art, the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, the Bureau of Engraving and Printing, the State Department, the Navy Museum, the Pentagon, and the National Aquarium. Security is tightest at the White House, Capitol, Supreme Court, Pentagon, and State Department.

The security checks get tedious if you are trying to squeeze a lot of sightseeing in a day. To ease the hassle:

- **Don't carry a purse or backpack;** save your museum shop purchases for the end of the day. This will get you into the Smithsonian museums more quickly, since most only search bags and packages. Large bags are prohibited on U.S. Capitol tours.
- **Empty your pockets of metal objects**—keys and coins, for example—as you would before a flight. Or keep them handy in one pocket, so you can quickly deposit them in the tray before passing through the security detector.
- **Treat the security guards with the same respect you do airport security staff.** Some are congenial; some are gruff and rude. But they have police powers, and security in the city is taken very seriously.
- I'm sure I don't have to remind you, but here I go anyway. **Don't carry knives, scissors, guns, replica guns, mace, or anything else that might be considered a weapon.** If you get passes for the Senate and House galleries, prohibited items also include cameras, recording devices, any battery-operated electronic device, and baby strollers.
- **Don't wear lapel pins, big belt buckles, or large metal necklaces that you know set off detector alarms.** At the White House Visitor Center, I was asked to remove my belt—one that has only a modest buckle and that has made it through countless airport security screenings without removal.

(and confusion) to the plan, he inserted diagonal avenues (not streets), most named for a state. Today: 50 states = 50 avenues, or almost. (California is a street; Ohio is a drive.) The diagonals carved countless triangles, circles, and miniparks in the otherwise straightforward layout of the city. Even I, a resident of many years, can get momentarily confused negotiating a circle with multiple intersecting streets.

Not everything L'Enfant drew up got implemented. But his basic concept is in place. Here's how it works today.

STREETS

The U.S. Capitol Building is the base point for street numbering and lettering. Picture two major thoroughfares intersecting beneath the Capitol's dome. They don't, but they come close. Like a giant "plus" sign, they cut the city into four quarters, represented in every street address as NW (northwest), NE (northeast), SW (southwest), and SE (southeast). The two intersecting streets are not numbered or lettered. The segment north of the Capitol grounds is North Capitol Street; south is South Capitol Street; east is East Capitol Street; and west is the Mall.

Got it? Okay, let's begin with the north/south numbered streets. Beginning at the west front of the Capitol, the streets number 1, 2, 3 West. The Lincoln Memorial at the west end of the Mall is 23rd Street. East of the Capitol, the numbering is the same: 1, 2, 3 East.

Now the lettered streets: From the Capitol north, they are A, B, C North; from the Capitol south, they are A, B, C South. Streets west of the Capitol become Northwest or Southwest; east of the Capitol, they are Northeast or Southeast. There are no "J," "X," "Y," or "Z" streets. At the end of the alphabet, the streets get names; as an aid, they are mostly alphabetical. Example: Euclid, Fairmont, Girard, Harvard. The first time through the alphabet, the names (with many exceptions) are limited to two syllables, as in Euclid, Fairmont, Girard, Harvard. In the second run-through, it's three syllables, as in Allison, Buchanan.

AVENUES

Other exceptions abound. Constitution Avenue, a major street paralleling the north side of the Mall, is located where you should expect to find A Street NW. Independence Avenue, the parallel street on the Mall's south side, takes the place of A Street SW. On the Mall itself, Madison and Jefferson drives link the Mall's museums. Columbia Road angles through the Adams Morgan neighborhood like an avenue but isn't.

The state-named avenues generally radiate from circles or squares in no logical order. The important ones that sightseers should know are:

- *Pennsylvania Avenue NW,* running northwest from the U.S. Capitol past the White House (in a slight jog) to George Washington University and Washington Circle to the edge of Georgetown.
- *Connecticut Avenue NW,* running north from Farragut Square (17th and K streets NW) to the National Zoological Park and on to (near) Hillwood Museum and Gardens and beyond.
- *Massachusetts Avenue NE/NW,* running northwest from Union Station to Dupont Circle, Embassy Row (it *is* Embassy Row), the Washington National Cathedral, the campus of American University and beyond.
- *Wisconsin Avenue NW,* running north through Georgetown as one of the trendy neighborhood's two major shopping streets, and beyond.

FINDING A STREET ADDRESS

Not too difficult to do on the lettered and numbered streets. For example, 1500 L St. NW is at the intersection of 15th and L streets; 1600 L St. NW is at the

intersection of 16th and L streets. The numbered streets aren't quite so simple. I'll use the address of my former employer, the *Washington Post,* as an example. The Post is located at 1150 15th St. NW. To know precisely where to find it, you have to count up the alphabet. Between A and B streets, you find 100–199 15th St. NW; between B and C, you find 200–299 15th St. NW. The number 1150 (The Post's address) is therefore found between L and M streets.

GETTING AROUND IN THE CITY

My advice here couldn't be plainer. Walk and use the Metro. On foot or by Metro, you can get to all but a few of the attractions, restaurants, shopping, and nightspots described in this guide. The chief exception is Georgetown, which the Metro bypasses. But you can walk to Georgetown from a reasonably close Metro station (Foggy Bottom/GWU or Dupont Circle) or catch a Metrobus, Circulator bus, or the Georgetown Metro Connection (see below).

THE METRO

This is the best way to get around in Washington. The 103-mile subway, second busiest in the country, made its debut in 1976, the year Washington and the country celebrated America's Bicentennial. Serving Washington and the Maryland and Virginia suburbs, it proved an instant hit, and the number of lines and stations is expected to grow. The stations, all underground in the center of the city, remain clean, comfortable in hot or cold weather, and safe. Muggings have occurred, but they are infrequent and tend to be committed at outlying stations late at night. Metro police patrol regularly. During the day, trains run every few minutes. As might be expected, they are crowded (and more expensive) during the morning and evening rush hours. To avoid the crush, don't use the Metro on weekdays from 8 to 9:30am and 4:30 to 6:30pm.

Lines

Metrorail operates five lines, all of which pass through downtown Washington. They are identified by color: Red Line, Blue Line, Orange Line, Green Line, Yellow Line. You can change easily between them (at no extra cost) at three central transfer stations—Metro Center, Gallery Place/Chinatown, and L'Enfant Plaza. Wall maps are posted inside every Metrorail station. Pick up a free "Your Guide to Metrorail" map at the stationmaster's kiosk at any station.

Hours

Metro begins operating at 5:30am on weekdays and 7am on weekends. It closes at midnight Sunday to Thursday; it remains open until 3am on Friday and Saturday nights. Rush hour fares are in effect from 5:30 to 9:30am and 3 to 7pm on weekdays.

During rush-hour periods, trains arrive in stations approximately every six minutes; every three minutes on the Red and Blue/Orange lines downtown. At off-peak periods, trains arrive every 12 minutes; every six minutes on the Red and Blue/Orange lines downtown. After 9:30pm, trains arrive every 15 to 20 minutes; every 10 minutes on the Blue/Orange line downtown.

Fares

The basic Metrorail fare is $1.35 per person. This fare will get you between downtown locations both in rush-hour and non-rush hour periods. The maximum fare, which is charged during the rush hour for a ride to the end of the line, is $3.90. Children age 4 and under ride free, but you are limited to two children per adult fare. Children enter through the stationmaster's gate next to the station kiosk.

If you plan to use the Metro frequently during the day, consider buying a **1-day pass** for $6.50 per person, which is valid for unlimited rides after 9:30am weekdays and all day on Saturday and Sunday. Keep in mind, if you plan to stay close to the Mall area, you don't save money until you take your fifth ride of the day. If you have checked into a suburban hotel, you could begin saving on your 3rd or 4th ride, depending on the distance into town.

My advice: Buy the 1-day pass if time is short and you want to see and do the most you can. Here's a possible scenario: Ride one, from your hotel to the Capitol for a tour; Ride two, from the Capitol to the Smithsonian Metro station to see the museums; Ride three, from the Smithsonian to the White House; Ride four, from the White House to Arlington National Cemetery; Ride five, back to the Mall or your hotel.

Passes are activated the first time you use them. Don't buy one for every day you plan to spend in Washington unless you have difficulty walking.

A 7-day **short trip pass** is $22, good for rides not costing more than $2.20 each during rush; **valid** for unlimited use any other time during 7 consecutive days. The 7-day **fast pass,** costing $33, is valid for 7 consecutive days of unlimited Metrorail travel. The 1-day pass, short trip pass, and fast pass can be purchased at Metro stations at fare/pass machines, online at www.metroopensdoors.com, and from a sales clerk at the Metro Center Sales Office, 12th and F streets NW (Metro Center station) from 7:30am to 6:30pm weekdays.

Seniors (65-plus) living outside the Metrorail and Metrobus service area can purchase a $10 half-price discount card. Using the card, you pay half the fare charged for any ride. In the downtown area, this allows you 14 rides for the price of the card, a real bargain. A photo ID indicating your date of birth is required. **Persons with disabilities** can present a Medicare card and photo ID for the discount card also. Purchase the seniors and disability passes in person at the Metro Center Sales Office, 12th and F streets NW (Metro Center station) from 7:30am to 6:30pm weekdays.

Using the Fare Machines: You will most likely feel like a dummy the first time you try to use a Metro fare machine. Nobody will laugh; they've been there too. Often a local will step up and help. The devices are something like an automated teller machine. First consult the chart posted at every station listing the fare from there to every other station. Next deposit your money in the fare card machine. Using the indicated buttons, select the amount you want to pay; you can choose an amount for one ride or several. The machine takes coins and $1, $5, and $20 bills. But it only returns up to $5 in change, all of it in the form of coins. Finally, retrieve your card from the machine.

As I write this, Metro stations are equipped with two types of fare card machines—old and new. The original machines do not take credit cards or issue passes. The new fare/pass machines do both. Visa, MasterCard, and Discover

Metro Information

You can get details on how to get from one part of the city to another via Metrorail or Metrobus from the system's web site, www.metroopensdoors.com. Or call ☎ 202/637-7000 (in English and Spanish); TTY 202/638-3780.

cards are accepted. The new devices, recognizable by the credit card logos on the front, also provide recorded voice instructions if you get confused.

Insert the fare card or pass in the entrance turnstile; it unlocks the gate. Hold onto the fare card; you will need it to unlock the gate at the exit turnstile. ***Warning:*** Two people can't share one fare card. If you bought one ride; the exit turnstile will keep your fare card. If you purchased multiple rides, it will return your card.

Metro Rules

Eating or drinking on Metro trains is not permitted. Take this warning seriously. The Metro police can pounce at any time. In 2004, a 45-year-old federal scientist was caught chewing a candy bar; she was handcuffed and jailed. In 2000, a 12-year-old girl, spotted eating a French fry in a station, got the handcuff treatment, too, if only briefly. Remember, this is the city that makes laws for the nation; it wants them enforced.

Metro is served by some of the longest escalators in the world. (If you are physically unable to use escalators or are frightened by heights, an elevator serves each station.) The Wheaton station escalator, 230 feet in length, is the longest in the Western Hemisphere. Stand to the right going up or going down on any of them, especially during rush hour. This allows riders in a hurry to pass.

The Circulator: This is a special Metrobus network that operates bright new red buses. Regular Metrobuses sport America's flag colors—red, white, and blue. The Circulator network is particularly useful for sightseers, since it links many major downtown attractions. The buses operate 7am to 9pm daily; buses run every 6 to 10 minutes; and the fare is $1 (exact change) for each ride. Pick up a route map at Metrorail stations or on a Circulator bus.

There are three routes (stops are indicated by a Circulator sign):

Smithsonian-National Gallery Loop (Purple on Circulator map) circles the edges of the National Mall, heading east on Constitution Avenue (north side) toward the Capitol and west (south side) on Independence Avenue past the Washington Monument to the World War II Memorial. All the major Smithsonian museums are located on this loop. Outside of walking, this is the cheapest way to get (for example) from the National Museum of Natural History to the National Museum of the American Indian.

Massachusetts Avenue-K Street Line (Yellow on map) links Union Station at its east terminus with Georgetown at its west. If you want to explore Georgetown, catch the Metro to the Farragut West or Farragut North stations, walk a block, and board the Circulator on K Street.

Convention Center-Southwest Waterfront Line (Red on map) links the Convention Center at its north terminus with the Mall (at midpoint) and the Maine Avenue riverfront at its south terminus. This line intersects the other two.

Georgetown Metro Connection: This is a two-line bus network sponsored by the Georgetown Business Improvement District to bring customers into the neighborhood from the closest Metro stops. One line serves the Foggy Bottom Metrorail station, delivering passengers to Wisconsin Avenue NW. The other line shuttles between the Dupont Circle Metro station and the Rosslyn (Va.) station, making stops in Georgetown along M Street. They operate 7am to midnight Monday to Thursday, 7am to 2am Friday, 8am to 2am Saturday, and 8am to midnight Sunday. The one-way fare is $1; or 35¢ with a Metrorail transfer.

Metrobuses: A fleet of more than 1,400 buses covers 350 routes, the fifth largest bus network in the country. Because of Metrorail and the Circulator network, you probably won't find much need to use them. Of all the attractions described in Chapter 5, only those on Embassy Row, including Washington National Cathedral, are best served by Metrobus—Routes N2, N4, and N6. The basic fare is $1.25, and exact change is required. If you are connecting from Metrorail, get a bus transfer at the station at which you enter the Metrorail system (not the exit station). With a Metrorail transfer, the basic bus fare is 25¢. Many (but not all) downtown bus stops display big colored maps showing the routes of the buses serving the stop. Scheduled arrival times also are listed.

Taxis: Taxis are readily available in downtown Washington; in the neighborhoods of Georgetown, Penn Quarter, Adams Morgan, U Street Corridor/14th Street, Foggy Bottom, and Capitol Hill; and along principal streets in outlying neighborhoods. Stand on a busy street and flag one down by waving an arm to attract the driver's attention. Taxis usually are lined up waiting for fares outside large downtown hotels. You should be aware that drivers are allowed to pick up multiple fares headed in the same direction. This means that someone else may already be in a cab that you flag down. Or your cab will stop and pick up someone else. Unfortunately you don't share the fare; each party pays his or her full fare.

Washington cabs operate on a zone system instead of meters. This is a controversial issue because of the opportunity for fraud. Each cab carries a zone map, but they are difficult to decipher. You are at the mercy of a driver who may fudge on zone boundaries. Suburban cabs use meters but they can only transport you in and out of Washington.

Someday meters may be required. Meanwhile, the base fare for one zone is $6.50. This is the minimum fare for one person, but it may be good for several blocks—and the fare doesn't increase if you get stalled in a traffic jam. For example, the fare from the Library of Congress on Capitol Hill to the Washington Monument, a distance of about two miles, is $6.50 for a single zone. A $1.50 charge is imposed for each additional passenger in your party, making $8 the minimum fare for two people. A $1 surcharge is added during morning (7–9:30am) and evening (4–6:30pm) rush hours. Fares to and from the region's three airports are based on mileage. Fares are regulated by the D.C. Taxicab Commission

(202/645-6018, www.dctaxi.dc.gov). You can print out a zone map on the web site and check sample fares on its "fare calculator."

Locals familiar with zone lines often will get out of the cab before it crosses into a second zone if their destination is within a short walk. Or they will walk a couple of blocks to an adjacent zone nearer their destination before hailing a cab.

Recently about 100 Yellow Cab drivers installed a small device on the dashboard called a fare calculator. They are like a taxi meter, but they use the Global Positioning System (GPS) to determine fares bases on the boundaries of the taxi zones. A printed receipt tells which zones you have covered. Reportedly, it is impossible for a driver using the device to cheat a customer. However, Yellow Cab maintains about 650 vehicles, so chances of riding in one with a calculator are limited.

If you must drive: Let me repeat: During the week, trying to drive between major attractions is just plain foolish. You will spend the day in the car hunting for an illusive parking space. In the evening, when the suburbanites depart, and on weekends, traffic eases and you might get lucky and find on-street parking. Most (but not all) parking meters do not need to be fed on Saturday and Sunday or after 6:30pm. Your best use of a car is in the evening to get you to dinner, the theater, or clubs. Many restaurants offer valet parking, charging $5 to $10 not including a tip. Expect to pay about $10 at night in a commercial parking lot.

Keep these additional tips in mind:

- **When booking a hotel, check the rate for overnight parking.** Free or inexpensive parking may allow you to pay more for your room. Leave the car parked while you explore by Metrorail, Metrobus, and on foot.
- **If you're lucky enough to find on-street parking near the Mall or other attraction you are visiting, be careful to heed the restriction signs.** Parking during the rush hour is banned on many commuter streets, and the chances of getting towed in this city are excellent. Parking is limited to a maximum of 3 hours during the day on residential streets in many neighborhoods; a sign will inform you that a zone sticker is required for longer parking times.
- **The city's many traffic circles confuse even those of us who live here.** Remember, vehicles already in the circle have the right of way; so yield when approaching the circle.
- **Two major downtown streets become one-way during rush hour only.** In the morning (7–9:30am), 17th Street NW is one way south (inbound) from Massachusetts Avenue to K Street NW. In the afternoon (4–6:30pm), 15th Street NW is one-way north (outbound) from K Street to Massachusetts Avenue NW. Many other streets are one way all of the time.
- **Two laws you should know:** In the District of Columbia, use of a cell phone while at the wheel is illegal, and you are subject to a hefty fine if stopped. At many intersections (most of them downtown), a right turn on red is prohibited between 7am and 7pm. Before you turn, check for a warning sign.

AND NOW, THE LIVELIEST NEIGHBORHOODS OF WASHINGTON

At first glance, Washington may seem to be a city of marble monuments and memorials inhabited solely by swarms of tourists. But actually it is home to about 582,000 residents, none of whom live on the National Mall. Rather, they populate a number of distinct neighborhoods, at least one of which—Georgetown—is older than the city itself.

On the pages that follow, I direct you to seven close-in neighborhoods that rate as the city's most dynamic and fun. Enjoy the attractions, dining, and entertainment. But also take a good look around at who lives in each. Do some people-watching. Note the varied architectural styles, a blend of old and new. Pop into a bakery, an ice-cream shop, cafe, or pub. Get a haircut or have your nails done. Pretend you are one of us.

GEORGETOWN

Best for: Boutique shopping, upscale dining, night life, movie theaters, classy hotels and inns, elegant old homes, gorgeous gardens, and celebrity spotting
What you won't find: Great museums, quiet streets, parking spaces
Metro: Foggy Bottom

Once a thriving colonial port, Georgetown predates the District of Columbia. Many congressmen, arriving in the newly created nation's capital, found lodging in Georgetown. Today, it remains the place to live for wealthy politicians, at least if you're a Democrat. John and Jacqueline Kennedy resided in Georgetown before moving on to the White House, and Jacqueline returned to its narrow, tree-shaded streets after the President was assassinated. Sen. John Kerry, the Democratic presidential nominee in 2004, and Sen. John Edwards, his running mate, lived in Georgetown—a hop, skip, and a jump from each other during the campaign. Occasionally a Republican finds the neighborhood's proximity to official Washington appealing. Sen. John Warner (R-VA) moved here while married to actress Elizabeth Taylor.

On weekends, the young and beautiful—and the rest of us—throng Wisconsin Avenue and M Street, Georgetown's intersecting shopping and entertainment streets. But the narrow tree-shaded side streets lined with expensive town houses and a scattering of mansions (my former boss, *Washington Post* publisher Katharine Graham, occupied a lovely estatelike gem at 2920 R St. NW) are as engaging in their own way. Architectural styles track American history from Federal-style town houses of the early 1800s to Victorian dazzlers to contemporary condos—many with a historic tale to tell. Sprawling Georgetown University, founded in 1789, is America's oldest Catholic institution of higher learning. President Bill Clinton graduated with the Class of 1968. I focus on historical highlights in a detailed walking tour of Georgetown in Chapter 8 (p. 191).

PENN QUARTER/CHINATOWN

Best for: Offbeat museums, casual dining, outdoor cafes, live theater, movie theaters, boutique shopping, arena sports, posh hotels, new luxury condos
What you won't find: Top-notch dining, shady streets, single-family homes
Metro: Archives/Navy Memorial

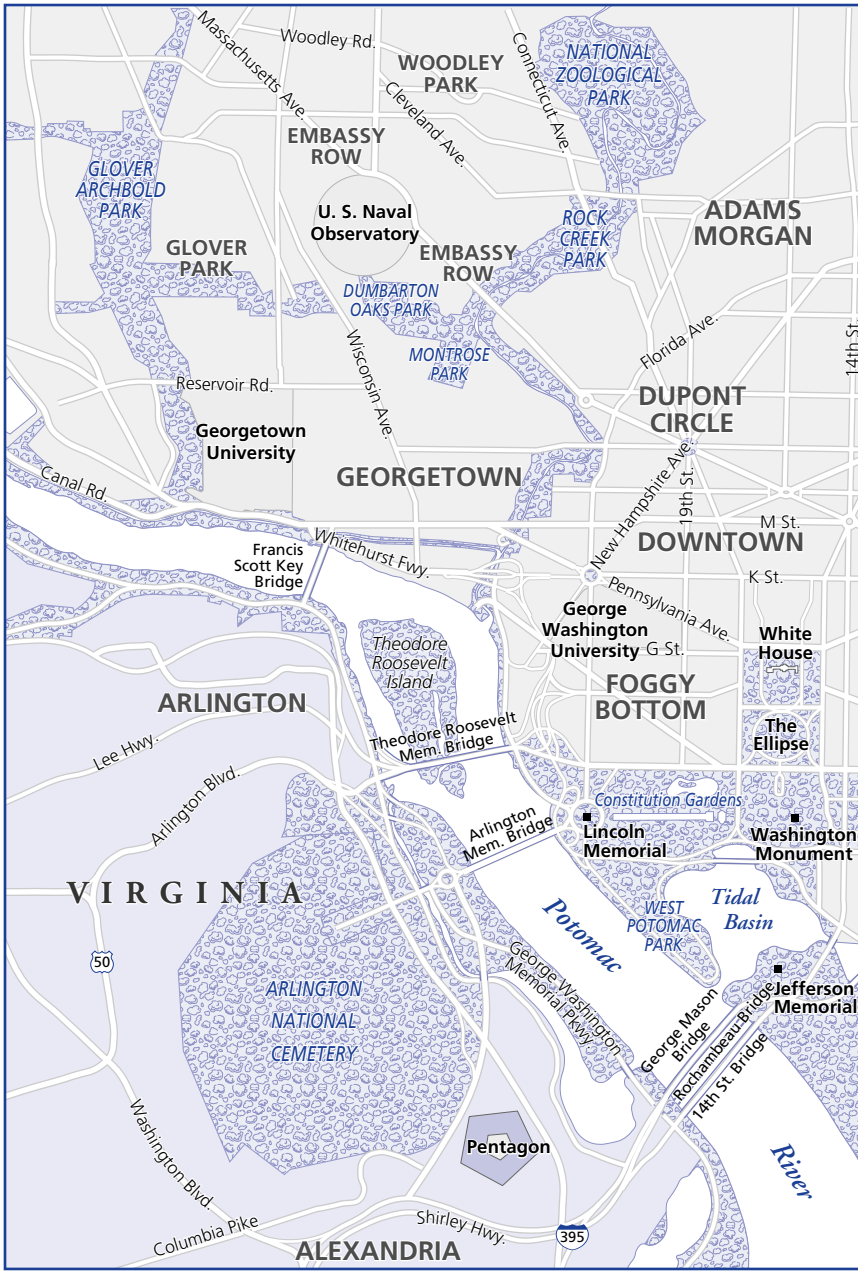
K Street Money

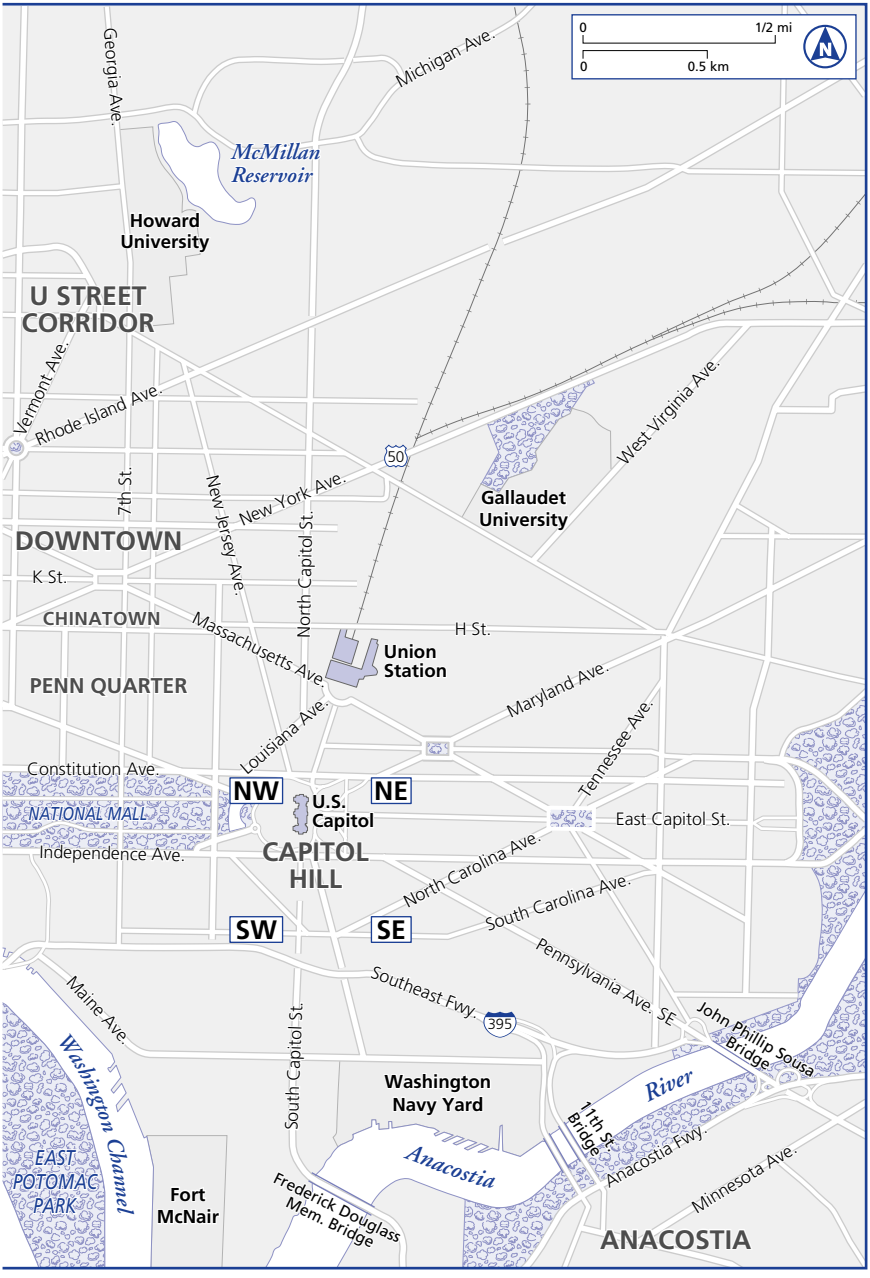
New York City has its Wall Street. In Washington, money and power are located in an area collectively known as K Street. Essentially, K Street is a street lined with bland, modern office buildings that runs west from Connecticut Avenue NW to about 24th Street NW. This is the haunt of lobby-law firms, trade associations, interest groups, and labor unions—lobbyists, in other words. Lobbying the federal government is a big business in the city, and business appears to be booming. Spending on federal lobbying in 2005 amounted to about $200 million a month, according to figures reported in the *Washington Post*. About 30,000 lobbyists are at work in the city, a number of them former members of Congress or congressional staff aides. They are in demand because of their first-hand knowledge of Capitol Hill and, often, their first-name friendship with committee chairs and other power holders. Congressional staffers joining a lobbying law firm might easily double their salaries to $300,000 or more. Not surprisingly, in or near K Street is where you will find some of the city's most expensive, expense-account restaurants and its upscale clothing stores, including Brooks Brothers and Burberry—both on Connecticut Avenue at M Street, just north of K Street.

Only recently a decaying downtown strip, the Penn Quarter (and adjacent Chinatown) has sprung to life as a hip new place to live and play. Construction of a massive sports/show area now called Verizon Center sparked the resurgence, which sort of took the city by surprise. So many museums have opened up—mostly in beautifully restored buildings—that one museum executive dubbed the neighborhood "The New Mall." Here you find the just revamped Smithsonian American Art Museum and National Portrait Gallery, the National Building Museum, the International Spy Museum, the Marion Koshland Science Museum, and the Immigration History Exhibit Hall.

Penn Quarter's "Main Street" is 7th Street NW, running north of Pennsylvania Avenue about seven blocks to Mount Vernon Square. Not quite so lively but still bustling are the parallel streets to the east and west. In recent decades, Chinatown has not been much more than a cluster of inexpensive Chinese restaurants. Now it has all but been absorbed by Penn Quarter. Numerous restaurants remain, as does the neighborhood's distinguishing feature—the Chinatown Gateway at 7th and H streets NW. It's a soaring arch crafted in the style of the Qing Dynasty (1649–1911). A colorfully painted gift of friendship from Beijing, it reputedly is the largest single-span Chinese archway in the world. Many street and storefront signs display both English lettering and Chinese characters, helping somewhat to enhance what little Chinese flavor remains.

Washington, D.C. Neighborhoods

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Georgia Ave.
Michigan Ave.
McMillan Reservoir
Howard University
U STREET CORRIDOR
Vermont Ave.
Rhode Island Ave.
7th St.
New Jersey Ave.
New York Ave.
North Capitol St.
50
West Virginia Ave.
Gallaudet University
DOWNTOWN
K St.
CHINATOWN
Massachusetts Ave.
H St.
Union Station
PENN QUARTER
Maryland Ave.
Louisiana Ave.
Tennessee Ave.
Constitution Ave.
NW
NE
NATIONAL MALL
U.S. Capitol
East Capitol St.
Independence Ave.
CAPITOL HILL
North Carolina Ave.
South Carolina Ave.
SW
SE
Pennsylvania Ave. SE
Southeast Fwy.
395
Maine Ave.
John Phillip Sousa Bridge
Washington Channel
South Capitol St.
Washington Navy Yard
River
11th St. Bridge
Anacostia Fwy.
EAST POTOMAC PARK
Fort McNair
Anacostia
Frederick Douglass Mem. Bridge
Minnesota Ave.
ANACOSTIA

ADAMS MORGAN

Best for: Ethnic restaurants, funky pubs, lively nightlife, international shopping, street murals

What you won't find: Hotels, fancy dining, great museums, parking spaces

Metro: Woodley Park Zoo/Adams Morgan

Funky and scruffy best describe this diverse international/Latino neighborhood centered on 18th Street and Columbia Road NW. On the edge of downtown, it's where I first lived in Washington in a rented apartment. I walked downtown to work, an easy 20-minute stroll energized even way back then by one-of-a-kind shops selling bargain-priced art objects, curios, and clothing from Third World countries. Aromas wafting from ethnic cafes tempted me from my own kitchen night after night. The old movie palaces are gone, and the Showboat, where I listened to great jazz, is no more. But the offbeat shops and ethnic cafes remain, and more have opened up. By day you will see lovely—if not always well-maintained—row houses dating to the late 19th and early 20th centuries and easy to spot outdoor wall murals. A giant painting of a red-headed siren with 13-foot-high breasts has advertised Madam's Organ, a blues and bluegrass pub at 2461 18th St. NW, since 1998. Elsewhere, it might be thought risqué, but not in Adams Morgan. At first the city protested, claiming the mural was, indeed, advertising without a permit. But the owner argued successfully that it was art. At night, the neighborhood is a hot spot for music, dancing, and bars favored by young professionals in the city.

This is an edgy neighborhood where testosterone-fueled fights occasionally erupt. So don't go alone, and don't stray off the well-lighted and heavily trafficked main streets. As I write this, the *Washington Post* delivered to my house carries a headline on the front of the Metro Section reading "Weekend Night Violence Fuels Adams Morgan's Image as a 'Devil's Playground.'" As the story notes, thousands enjoy the neighborhood's nightlife safely. But violent crimes have averaged about seven a month in recent years, primarily as inebriated revelers spill out onto the crowded sidewalks at the 3am bar-closing hour on weekends. If you go, stay reasonably sober and call it quits early in the evening.

A historic note: Adams Morgan's name refers to two old schools located in the area, the Adams School and the Morgan School. In days of segregation, one school was restricted to white students and the other to African-Americans. In the neighborhood today, the linked names celebrate its multicultural diversity.

U STREET CORRIDOR/14TH STREET

Best for: Trendy new restaurants, soul food, live music clubs, local African-American history, spicy nightlife, vintage clothing boutiques

What you won't find here: Top-notch dining, sedate evenings, major museums, suburbanites

Metro: U Street-African-American Civil Rights Memorial-Cardozo

You will see another Washington here, a down-at-the-heels neighborhood gradually perking up as a hot entertainment and fine dining center. For many visitors not accustomed to big city life, it may seem threatening. But really, to come here will be an adventure.

Once U Street NW was Washington's "Black Broadway." Here the elite of the city's black society enjoyed the music of such greats as Sarah Vaughn, Cab Calloway, Billie Holiday, Nat King Cole, and Louis Armstrong. After years of decline the street and surrounding neighborhood, centered at 14th and U streets NW, are experiencing a revival. Colorful old row houses have been transformed into offbeat shops, sophisticated (and reasonably priced) restaurants, chic bars, and other nightspots. Along 14th Street north of P Street NW, former derelict structures have been turned into luxury condos. My wife and I are regulars at Studio Theatre at 14th and P, one of the city's energetic and provocative small theaters.

A must stop for every visitor, locals and out-of-towners alike, is Ben's Chili Bowl at 1213 U St. NW (p. 73). It's a greasy spoon kind of lunch counter that has been serving up tasty chili half-smokes (a hot dog, really) with cheese fries and thick milkshakes for half a century. The meal is a diet disaster, but a seat at the counter will instantly thrust you into the heart of the community. Who knows? You may find yourself seated next to Washington's mayor, the police chief, or the chef of the fancy restaurant down the street. Neighboring Lincoln Theatre, a historic landmark, has been beautifully restored and put back into use showcasing local dance, theater, and musical talent. The dramatic African-American Civil War Memorial at Vermont Avenue and U Street NW (p. 127) honors more than 200,000 black soldiers and their white officer corps who served in the Civil War.

> *"In the 1940s, The corner of 14th and U was the grapevine. The cream of black society and everybody else passed through there, so if you were at 14th and U, you knew where the parties were, you knew who was in town, you knew if there was trouble. If you were at that corner, you always had the sense that something big was about to happen."*
>
> —Arthur Ashe, as quoted by 14th & U Main Street Initiative

Like Adams Morgan, the neighborhood—located just north of downtown—remains edgy, and gunfire in the wee hours, if rare, is a possibility. So don't go alone, don't stray off the well-lighted and heavily trafficked main streets, and don't overdo the booze.

DUPONT CIRCLE/KALORAMA

Best for: Cozy inns, international dining, poetry readings, art galleries, a gay/lesbian shop, tidy Victorian row houses, Beaux Arts mansions, small museums
What you won't find here: Wild nightlife, many children, live theater
Metro: Dupont Circle

Washington's loveliest downtown neighborhood, Dupont Circle/Kalorama, became the place after the Civil War for the city's wealthy to build grand Beaux Art mansions and elegant brick row houses. Many of the mansions now house embassies; the row houses, well preserved, are prized residences for the city's professionals and intellectuals drawn by its cosmopolitan ambiance. It is especially popular with the local gay, lesbian, and bisexual community.

Art on Call

Those funky fire alarm boxes you see scattered across the Dupont Circle neighborhood once were 19th century technological wonders, summoning the fire brigades. Now they're works of art. Twenty-two local artists each decorated one of the 22 long-abandoned sidewalk posts, which had become eyesores. The project, dubbed Art on Call, was organized by neighborhood citizens groups and Cultural Tourism DC. The city originally installed the fireboxes just after the Civil War. When someone activated them, a telegraph link transmitted the box number to the fire alarm center. In the 1970s, a telephone connection made the alarm call. The 911 system, introduced in the 1990s, ended their usefulness. The refurbished boxes made their debut on Sept. 10, 2005.

Dupont Circle, a shady urban park, is the heart of the neighborhood. Relax here on a bench to enjoy top-notch people-watching. It's a meeting place for the city's corps of young bicycle messengers; for foreign expatriates protesting their homeland government; for chess players and for dog walkers. At the circle's center, Dupont Memorial Fountain is a splashing marble tribute to Rear Admiral Samuel Francis Dupont, a Civil War hero. It was designed by Daniel Chester French, the sculptor of the Lincoln Memorial. You wouldn't be the first or maybe even the 100,000th person to soak tired feet in its water.

Browse the shops that line Connecticut Avenue, which bisects the Circle. Kramerbooks & Afterwards Café at 1517 Connecticut Ave. NW is a neighborhood institution. It's motto: "Serving Latte to the Literati Since 1976." Then venture onto the side streets to savor the architectural treats. The Schneider Row Houses in the 1700 block of Q Street NW are a brown and greenstone fantasy of Romanesque turrets, projecting bays, and tiled mansard roofs. The neighborhood houses the Phillips Gallery, Textile Museum, Woodrow Wilson House, and Anderson House. It is the conclusion (or start, if you choose) for an Embassy Row walking tour, which I outline in Chapter 8 (p. 203).

CAPITOL HILL

Best for: Power lunches, business hotels, an outdoor market, neighborhood cafes, political fights, scandals
What you won't find here: Spacious yards, department stores, raucous night life
Metro: Eastern Market

Wrapped around the U.S. Capitol, Capitol Hill is an eclectic, racially mixed neighborhood mingling congressional aides, their Senate and House bosses, federal staffers, and blue-collar workers. Oh, and did I mention the Marines? The Hill, as it is commonly called, also encompasses the Marine Barracks, the oldest continuously active Marine installation in the country (dating to 1801). Today, the Marine Band, the official White House ceremonial band, is stationed here.

Side streets east of the Capitol are lined by lovely Victorian-era houses carefully (and expensively) restored and maintained. Its principle street, Pennsylvania Avenue SE, is a traffic-clogged commuter route, but you also will find diverse restaurants and shops. Take a look, too, at 8th Street SE, which is undergoing revitalization by an organization called Barracks Row Main Street. It was the city's first commercial street, home to the crafts workers who built Washington. The Marine Barracks (thus the name) is two blocks south.

The Capitol, the Supreme Court, the Library of Congress, the historic Navy Yard, and Union Station are the big attractions here—at least for out-of-towners. For locals, Capitol Hill's most engaging attraction is Eastern Market at 7th and C streets SE, a 19th-century emporium that still keeps the crowds coming. Especially on weekends, people flock to the market to see and be seen, and to pick up cheeses, fresh fruit, produce, meat, fish, flowers, and baked goods. On Saturday artisans and photographers display their works. On Sunday, the Flea Market takes over. The market is open 7am to 6pm Tuesday through Saturday and 9am to 4pm Sunday.

And the scandals I mentioned—they erupt with unfortunate regularity in the precincts of the Senate and House.

FOGGY BOTTOM

Best for: River walks, boutique hotels, college hangouts, grand opera, free entertainment, volleyball matches

What you won't find here: Great shopping, vibrant nightlife

Metro: Foggy Bottom-George Washington University

Foggy Bottom is just that—a lowland adjacent to the Potomac River, where winter fogs are not unusual. Well, that's one account of the name. Another is that the neighborhood surrounds the U.S. Department of State, where foggy diplomatic language is similarly common. Whatever, it's a decidedly upscale neighborhood of tiny, but costly row houses, swank condo apartment buildings (the famed Watergate, for one), high-rise dorms sleeping George Washington University undergrads, a major teaching hospital, and the massive John F. Kennedy Center.

Yes, go see all of this. But give yourself plenty of time for a lovely riverside walk. Begin where Virginia Avenue NW dead ends at Rock Creek Parkway, just west of the Kennedy Center. Walk south on the paved walking and bicycling trail to the Lincoln Memorial. The views across the river to Theodore Roosevelt Island and Arlington National Cemetery are lovely. When colleges are in session, this stretch of the Potomac is the course for varsity shell races. Just south of the Lincoln Memorial, take in the volleyball matches that are a regular weekend and evening event from spring through fall.

North of the Lincoln Memorial, get your photo snapped sitting in the lap of Albert Einstein outside the National Academy of Science and Engineering (23rd Street and Constitution Avenue NW). He sits in bronze, a raffish, grandfatherly guy seemingly eager and open to your company. Climbing onto his outstretched leg is almost a rite of passage for a dutiful sightseer.

Four Place Names

In Chapter 4 and Chapter 10 I mention four other neighborhoods.

- **Tenleytown** (Wisconsin and Nebraska avenues NW; Metro: Tenleytown-American University) features a small shopping district in an upscale neighborhood. Its most popular attraction is Best Buy, a large TV and other electronics discount store.
- **Logan Circle** (13th and P streets NW; Metro: Dupont Circle and six-block walk) marks the dividing point between Downtown and the developing 14th Street area to the north. Studio Theatre is nearby. Logan Circle was once considered part of Shaw (see below) but has become a neighborhood of its own.
- **Shaw** (just east of Logan Circle/Metro: Shaw-Howard University) is a primarily residential, African-American neighborhood undergoing gentrification. Duke Ellington was a Shaw native; several Ethiopian restaurants have sprouted on 9th Street NW between S and U streets; and the Washington Convention Center is located on the southern edge of Shaw.
- **Glover Park** (north of Georgetown and west of Wisconsin Avenue NW) is also a primarily residential area with home prices less than in Georgetown. A cluster of shops and restaurants at Wisconsin and Calvert streets serve the neighborhood.

AND TWO MORE

These primarily residential neighborhoods, one poor, the other wealthy, are mentioned elsewhere in this guidebook. They generally have little to offer to the tourist except specified attractions:

ANACOSTIA (METRO: ANACOSTIA)

Best for: Frederick Douglass National Historic Site
What you won't find here: Fine dining, lodgings, entertainment
Metro: Anacostia

Parts of Anacostia are so troubled taxis are hesitant to take passengers there at night, even though the law requires them to do so. Because housing tends to be less expensive, however, stable middle-class areas are on the upsurge.

FRIENDSHIP HEIGHTS (METRO: FRIENDSHIP HEIGHTS)

Best for: Upscale shopping at Neiman Marcus, Bloomingdales, Saks Fifth Avenue, Brooks Brothers, Borders Books
What you won't find here: Museums, memorials, monuments
Metro: Friendship Heights

Washington shares the upscale Friendship Heights shopping district with Maryland's Montgomery County on the north side of Western Avenue NW. This is the bustling mix of major department stores, boutiques, houseware outlets, cafes, and movie theaters Washington dreams of some day tempting back to the downtown core.

3 Accommodations, Both Standard and Not

All the options, from budget digs to comfy (and affordable) suites in upscale hotels

IN A CITY WHERE SO MUCH OF WHAT YOU WANT TO SEE AND DO IS FREE, your biggest expense is—you guessed it—a place to stay. Washington, D.C. has the fourth highest hotel rates in the country (after New York City, Boston, and Chicago), with rooms *averaging* $200 a night; many hotels will try to sock you for much more than that, especially when the town is crowded with visitors. But bargains exist, and I'm here to help you find them. In the list that follows, I describe numerous accommodations that charge half that average with a number of affordable splurge choices as well. At almost all, breakfast is included in the rate.

Most lodgings in the list are located in downtown Washington neighborhoods, all fairly close to each other and to the National Mall (or at most 2 or 3 stops away from it on the metro). Yes, I know that for years budget travel writers have urged readers to stay outside the city center where lodgings are cheaper. But I've never bought that argument. Many or most of us commute to work daily, fighting street traffic or being squeezed in overcrowded buses. I know I don't want to commute on my vacation, and I've managed to locate affordable places to stay so you can avoid that hassle too. And if you have come to see Washington, why not stay in a Washington neighborhood?

Also, in the Washington area suburban hotels aren't all that much easier on the wallet—if at all—unless you stay so far out of the city you spend much of your time commuting. That's because they tend to be located in upscale communities that draw hordes of expense-account business travelers. Two of Washington's suburbs (Maryland's Montgomery County and Virginia's Fairfax County) are among the wealthiest counties in the nation. Nevertheless, I'm sure some of you will disagree with me. So you'll find a few recommended suburban hotels and house rentals below (the latter can be quite a good option for families and large groups).

A note for parents: Many bed-and-breakfast inns discourage young children, and I've noted those that don't accept them. Most other lodgings, however, allow children to stay free in their parent's room—but the age varies from under 18 to under 12. An excellent option for families are apartment rentals, which often mimic the cost of a hotel room, but offer much more space and a kitchen to boot (helpful if you've got a picky eater in tow). You'll find a complete discussion of apartment rentals in the alternative accommodations section below.

ALTERNATIVE ACCOMMODATIONS

It's a tradition in the Pauline Frommer series to lead off with the most gracious, most revealing, and most economical way to see any city in the world. No, I'm not talking about staying with friends, although that's a terrific idea, and if you can arrange that, you're way ahead of the game. No need to read any further in *this* chapter.

I'm actually proposing skipping hotels altogether. In Washington, D.C., as in many other major cities of the world, renting an apartment or a room in an apartment (or town house) offers perks and privileges far beyond what any hotel can offer. Though the rates for two people might not always be less than what you'd pay at a hotel, the advantages are many, not the least of which is the fact that you can cook some of your meals (when renting a complete apartment). That's not a knock against the local restaurant scene, which is top notch. But having the ability to whip up a snack at will, fix a lunch to go, or stay in and cook dinner can offer significant savings. And there are many other, less tangible benefits like privacy, independence, and a chance to see what it's like to live like a Washingtonian, even if it's just for a week. Since these apartments are owned by locals—who rent only occasionally, and live there the rest of the time (filling them with comfy furniture, pictures, and other bric-a-brac that makes a home a home)—they also tend to have a more friendly ambiance than hotels. If you're more than two, and especially if you are traveling en famille, the benefits of an apartment rental can be huge. Family suites can be quite costly, and the price of two connecting hotel rooms is stratospheric. With an apartment rental, you'll have more room—perhaps a door separating you from the little ones at night—and usually, walls that block out enough sound to let your neighbors sleep in the mornings if your children are being rowdy. The downsides? You won't have a concierge to help you plan your vacation, or a bellman to carry bags, but these seem like small quibbles when you consider the pluses of having your own pad in the city.

In the case of "hosted rentals" or home stays, you have the pleasure of getting to know a citizen of the city. Yes, some are uncomfortable with the idea of staying in a stranger's home. And the host may have a day job, so you'll probably have to work around their schedule when arranging an arrival time. Again, these are ultimately small concerns. In the best-case scenarios, your host will act as an affable advisor, helping to pave your way in the big city, and perhaps forming a friendship that lasts longer than the visit.

Beyond apartment rentals, Washington has spawned a number of congenial, reasonably priced guesthouses and small B&Bs. These offer slightly more in the way of services but retain a homey, intimate atmosphere. Set primarily in stately Victorian town houses and usually housing no more than 20 guests at a time, they can be ideal for guests who are tired of cookie-cutter hotel furnishings and want a more social experience. At these types of lodgings, you're more apt to meet your fellow guests in the lounge or breakfast room. One of the unsung perks of this sort of travel is that you meet unusually gracious, resourceful, quirky locals who serve as B&B owners. "Many of our hosts are in this business because of the people they get to meet," explains Steve Lucas, General Manager of the reservations service Bed & Breakfast Accommodations Ltd. of Washington, D.C. (p. 28). "They're not making their living off of this, but they really thrive off of meeting people

from all over the world. While we have a wide variety of hosts, most are in non-traditional careers—artists, writers, and the like. They are really wonderful people." The drawbacks are mostly physical: no bellmen are on duty to haul luggage, and two- and three-story guesthouses don't have elevators.

FINDING THAT "ALTERNATIVE ACCOMMODATION"

Because Washington is a relatively small city, and the concept of vacation apartment rentals in private homes is still fairly new here, there's not an abundance of choices when it comes to reservations organizations. In fact, as we go to press, there's only one—count it, one—for rentals and small B&Bs in the city; and one for those in the suburbs.

Because most people want to stay in D.C. itself, I'll start with the city-booker. **Bed & Breakfast Accommodations, Ltd. of Washington, D.C.** (☎ 877/893-3233; www.bedandbreakfastdc.com; AE, MC, V) is a solid organization, with a number of top-notch lodgings in its fold. Because it's literally the only game in town, staff here can be quite picky when it comes to which properties they'll represent. "We check to make sure that the lodgings are offering the best welcome possible for visitors. If the closets aren't cleaned out, if there isn't a lock on the guest room door, if the shared bathroom is clearly the owners, we don't work with them," says Steve Logan, general manager. "We also look at how often the linens are changed (our standard is a minimum of 2 towels, changed every third day). And we won't represent lodgings that are in undesirable areas of D.C." They are also quite aware that they face stiff competition from standard hotels in the city, so complaints are taken seriously. And as opposed to picking a rental via Craigslist, VRBO, or some other direct by owner source, if there's a problem, Bed and Breakfast Accommodations does all it can to re-accommodate the guest. "If we get two or three complaints about a house, we send a warning to the host that they have to change their ways, or we won't represent them any longer. It's not just their reputation, it's ours that's at stake," says Logan. "Usually, the hosts will fix any problems that come up. In the 10 years I've been here, we've only stopped working with one property."

So what kind of apartments or private B&Bs will you find through this company? The rentals tend to be fully furnished, English basement-type apartments with the host, usually the owner, living upstairs. A number are located in red brick, Victorian-era town houses that double as bed-and-breakfast inns. The advantage they offer is that either the owner or a housekeeper is on the premises nearly around the clock, so you're not locked into a set arrival time when the apartment owner is at home; you also always have somebody right upstairs to contact if you need directions to the grocery store, or the toilet gets clogged. The B&Bs—some of which are really hosted apartments in which you are the sole guest of a resident's house—come in all shapes, sizes, and decor styles, but they do have some things in common. The guest always has a room that's far enough from the host's own room to feel comfortable and ensure privacy. Although guests never have cooking privileges in B&Bs (there's actually an ordinance against it), they do get fed well and often. It's common for hosts to set out freshly baked cookies or muffins, perhaps some sherry, or another such treat in the afternoons. And because these stays are called "B&Bs" breakfast is always included, and it's usually a more generous meal than you'll get in those hotels that throw a few

bagels and croissants your way in the morning. All homes are visited at least twice a year, and the photos on the organization's website are updated every year and a half, so you should get a good idea of what you'll be getting from those.

Here are just a couple of examples of what you might book:

- The ultra-comfy **Aaron Shipman Apartment** is set in the basement of a B&B (if you ask nicely, you might nab some freshly baked breakfast muffins) and is furnished with a mix of antiques and contemporary pieces. If you come during cold weather, you can snuggle up in the love seat facing the wood-burning fireplace. The kitchen is quite usable, and the walls are decorated with colorful framed posters promoting bygone cultural performances. A large shaded Victorian-style porch with comfy seating overlooks the formal English gardens out back, and secure parking ($17 a night) is provided. It's suitable for up to four people (children welcome), sleeping two in the queen-sized bed in the bedroom and two in the queen-sized sleeping sofa in the large living room. Rates start at $110 a night but can go higher (depending on the season, number of guests, and length of stay).
- An elegant, chandelier-lit town house directly behind the Library of Congress, **Celia's Place** is not only extraordinarily well-located for sightseeing, but it has as its hostess a fascinating, worldly, gregarious owner, who was once married to a congressman and now spends her time writing and teaching English Literature. It's a delight just getting to know her. She rents out a little suite of rooms (suitable for 2–4 people, though they'd have to know one another as the rooms are set up railroad style, so that one must go through the other to exit). Her 150-year-old house is overflowing with art works, and the rooms are homey in an old-fashioned way, with an antimacassar on the brass bed and lots of potted plants. Costs: from $125 low season, $155 in high.
- The **Guest Quarters on Capitol Hill** is an ultra-family-friendly apartment with a large bedroom in the back and a board-game and DVD-filled living room at front. Really anything your little ones could want—crayons, books, coloring books, puzzles—are set on shelves ready for use. The living room also has a comfortable fold out couch (the hostess can provide a porta-crib for babies). In the center of the two rooms is an eat-in kitchen, fully stocked with a washer and dryer off of it. It's perfect for a family getaway—clean and cheerful but simply furnished so you don't have to worry about breaking anything. Prices start at $115 a night.
- **The Chester Arthur House** was once owned by the undersecretary of the treasury for that president. Its owners are two natural history writers (one writes quite often for *National Geographic*), and they've given each room its own theme: one's Scottish with tartan draperies and framed Scottish prints on the walls, another has a frillier appeal with dusty pink walls and Sunday *Star Magazine* covers on the walls, the third was being renovated when I visited. All rooms are oversized with a rocking chair for reading and two feature bay windows that flood the room with light. And their breakfasts are creative, ranging from egg timbales to Belgian waffles to something they call "breakfast pizza." Meals can be taken on the lovely little deck out back. Nightly rates here range from $125 to $145 in low season, up to $195 in high.

A minimum stay at all of the properties represented by this firm is three days, although occasionally, a single overnight is permitted. Low season rates range for $85 to $145 a night; high season $125 to $200. Staff is at the offices from 9am to 5pm, Mondays through Fridays, and do their best to "match-make," hooking up visitors with just the right type of accommodation for them. Booked guests get a cell phone number for one of the staff, so that they can reach them in case of any problems, 24/7. The firm charges a $10 booking fee.

Those looking for small B&Bs or homestays in the Virginia suburbs turn to the **Capital Area Bed and Breakfast Network** (☎ 888/549-3415; www.aabbn.com; AE, MC, V). It represents a dozen B&Bs and homes that range in price from just $70 per night all the way up to $225. (Until 2007, the firm was known as the Arlington & Alexandria Bed & Breakfast Networks.)

Some examples of what you might get through this company:

- **Rose Hill House** in Alexandria, VA, is for those people who want peace and quiet for a low, low rate. The very pretty, double room here (the hostess is a mosaics artist, and you'll see her work throughout the house) goes for just $60 per night for singles, $70 for doubles, year-round. A private bathroom is down the hall. Unusually for a homestay, guests are given full kitchen privileges, which can be a real money saver.
- **The Lee Retreat,** in the Old Town of Alexandria, has quite a pedigree. The furnishings here—superb English antiques primarily—are so lovely that the house was a regular on home tours of the area before the owner started accepting paying B&B guests. There's only one guest room, with two twin beds and a private bathroom down the hall, but it's a charmer and a value at $125 year round (with breakfast). The house is surrounded by top-notch restaurants and just 1 block from a bus that will zip you to the Metro.
- **Yesteryears Treasure House** is a third choice in convenient Alexandria, VA. A part of the charm of staying here is meeting the hostess, Moina Ratliff. She came to Washington with her father, a four-term Member of Congress from western Missouri, and went on to enjoy a 32-year career on Capitol Hill legislative staffs. Talk to her for the inside scoop of Congress. In semi-retirement, she's a painter—her works hang on the walls of her 1920 Craftsman-style home, which she recently renovated. All three guest rooms are located in a brand-new second-floor add-on to the house, so everything is bright and fresh. The Junior Suite ($125 a night for two) features a queen-sized four-poster bed, three comfortable easy chairs, and two large windows looking out to the garden. The Wicker Room (named for the white wicker furnishings) and Ramona's Room (named for a grown daughter) are adorned with floral print comforters. Priced at $100 a night, they share a bath. The house is about a 10-minute walk from the Metrorail station.
- Amy Southard, host at **Mount Vernon Manor** near George Washington's Mount Vernon Plantation, is no slouch herself. She's a kitchen and bath designer, realtor, and builder. You can see the results in her gorgeous new home that looks like something (inside and out) that would adorn the cover of House Beautiful magazine. Her two rooms, as you might expect, are at the upper end of the reservation service's price range (starting at $175).

A FEW OTHER OPTIONS FOR APARTMENT RENTALS

Though not as quaint and cute, the commercially managed, fully furnished apartments offered by **Oakwood Worldwide** (☎ 877/902-0832; www.oakwood.com/cms/is-holiday-travel.html) are another terrific option for families. Most of Oakwood's properties require a 30-day minimum stay, but two of its close-in suburban Virginia apartment buildings offer 3-day minimum stays, making them perfect for tourists. At **Oakwood Falls Church** (6 miles west of Washington), a studio is $145 a night; a one-bedroom is $165; and a two-bedroom is $195, based on a 3-day minimum stay. At **Oakwood Crystal City** (near Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport), a one-bedroom is $185 a night; two bedroom, $215, based on a 3-day minimum stay. Both are furnished as nicely as you might expect in a fine downtown hotel—think soothing tans, modern furniture, framed art on the walls—and each offers a seasonal outdoor swimming pool. If you can choose between them, stay in Crystal City, which is closer to Reagan airport and has faster Metrorail service to the Mall. Oakwood also maintains a modern high-rise apartment building at Dupont Circle, the **Oakwood Dupont Circle** at 2000 N St. NW in Washington. However, it requires a five-day minimum stay. As attractively furnished as the Virginia facilities—and far more convenient to sightseeing—its rates for a studio are $170 a night, $180 for a two-bedroom, and $215 for a three-bedroom.

The chanciest option—but still very viable if you do your homework—is renting a room, apartment, or house via the Internet from a **private owner.** The chancy part is that no reservation service is vetting these places for you. You deal directly with the owners and trust them to provide the fully functioning accommodations they have described. One-bedroom apartments sleeping up to four persons (with a sleeper sofa in the living room) can be found for between $75 and $160 a night, or $600 to $1,100 a week, which is far cheaper than most downtown hotels. You'll find web ads for studios and one- and two-bedroom apartments in condominium buildings and in row houses in several of the city's close-in neighborhoods—and even an occasional house in DC or the suburbs.

Some places require a minimum stay of 3 to 5 days, and you may be penalized if you depart early. A few impose a cleaning charge that can amount to as much as $100. A refundable security deposit of $150 may also be imposed. Not all owners accept credit cards. If you are a smoker, you may be required to step outside.

Keeping these factors in mind, you could find a charming, well-kept apartment in one of the city's beautifully restored row houses. Several properties provide bicycles free of charge to explore the neighborhood.

The most convenient way to find owner rentals is on the websites to which many subscribe. Many owners advertise the same property on most of them. The sites are:

- **Vacation Rental by Owner** (www.vrbo.com) is the site you should check first because it displays the largest selection.
- **Cyberrentals** (www.cyberrentals.com)
- **Great Rentals** (www.greatrentals.com)
- **A1 Vacations** (www.a1vacations.com)
- **Rentalo** (www.rentalo.com)

Questions to Ask before Renting from an Owner

By Pauline Frommer

Here are the questions I think it's essential to ask before renting a home from one of the "direct by owner" sites:

1. **Does the owner live nearby?** It's preferable that she does as she'll better be able to help you should you have a problem in the house. I've also found that the closer the owner is to his property, the better the maintenance tends to be. If the owner isn't in the city but you like the look of the property, make sure that there's at least some type of caretaker nearby whom you can call on if necessary.
2. **What's included in the rental fee?** You don't want to show up at a rental place for 3 days and find that there's no dishwashing soap, garbage bags, toilet paper, or other basic household goods. Most rentals do include them, but it's important to ask. Free local calls and Wi-Fi or high speed internet access can save you a lot of money and are standard in many rental apartments but not all, so be sure to ask about that as well.
3. **Where is it?** Sounds like a basic question, but many owners can be vague about the actual location of a home, knowing that some areas of Washington are more desirable than others. So be sure to get actual cross streets, how close the nearest police station is, and where the closest Metro stop is.
4. **What's the square footage of the home?** The more space you have, the more privacy each member of your party gets.

If you can combine the right answers to the questions above with the right prices, I say: go for it. As with the homes rented by the agencies (which are, in some cases, the same ones being offered on such sites as VRBO.com), you're obtaining lodgings for a less expensive, more relaxing vacation.

GUESTHOUSES AND B&BS

A word on our rating system: A star following the name of the lodging highlights a place that I think is especially attractive or gives you the best value for your money. Here's how the star ratings break down:

No stars: Good
★ Very good
★★ Great
★★★ Outstanding! A must!

In each category, the accommodations are described in ascending order of cost, starting with the cheapest and moving upwards. Each listing is preceded by one,

two, three, or four dollar signs, indicating its price range per double room, as follows:

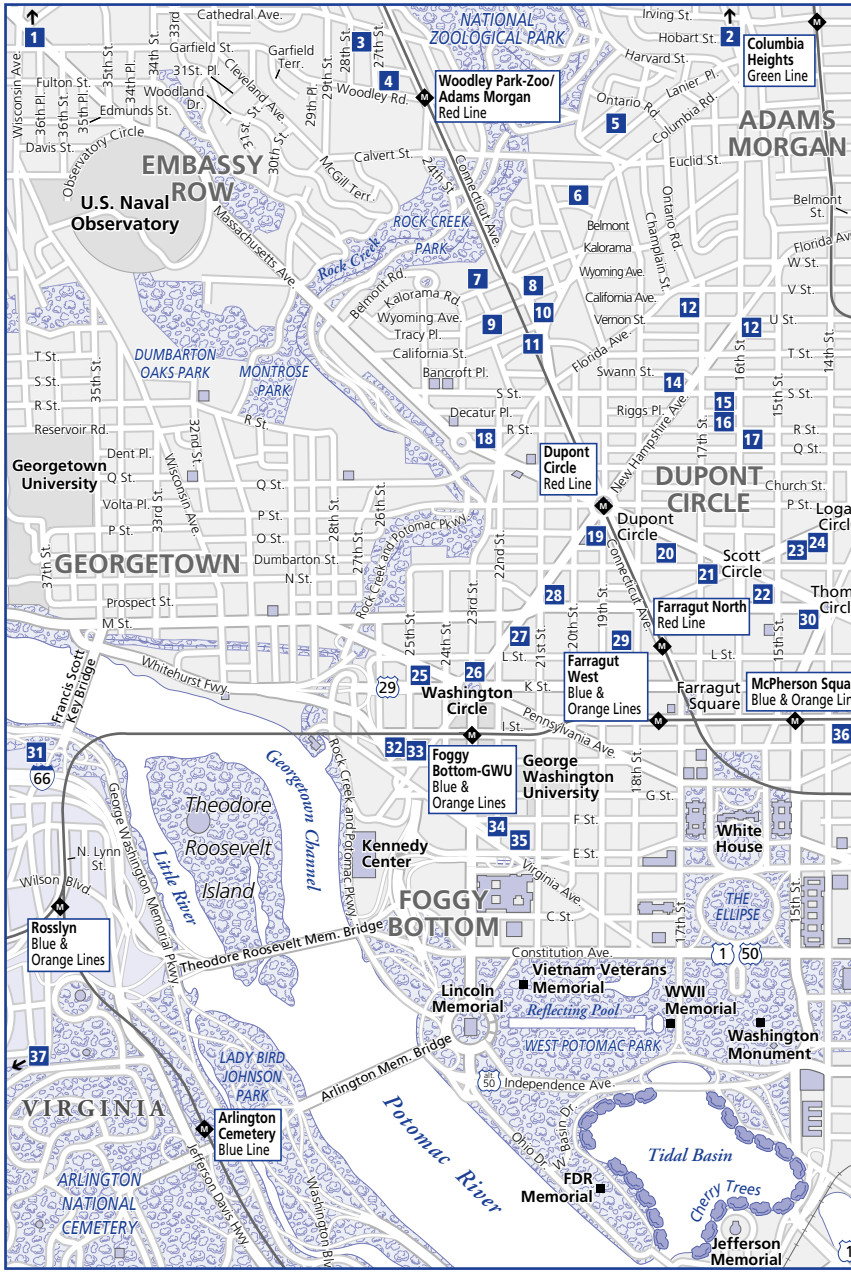
$: Up to $100 a night
$$: $101–$125
$$$: $126–$175
$$$$: Over $175

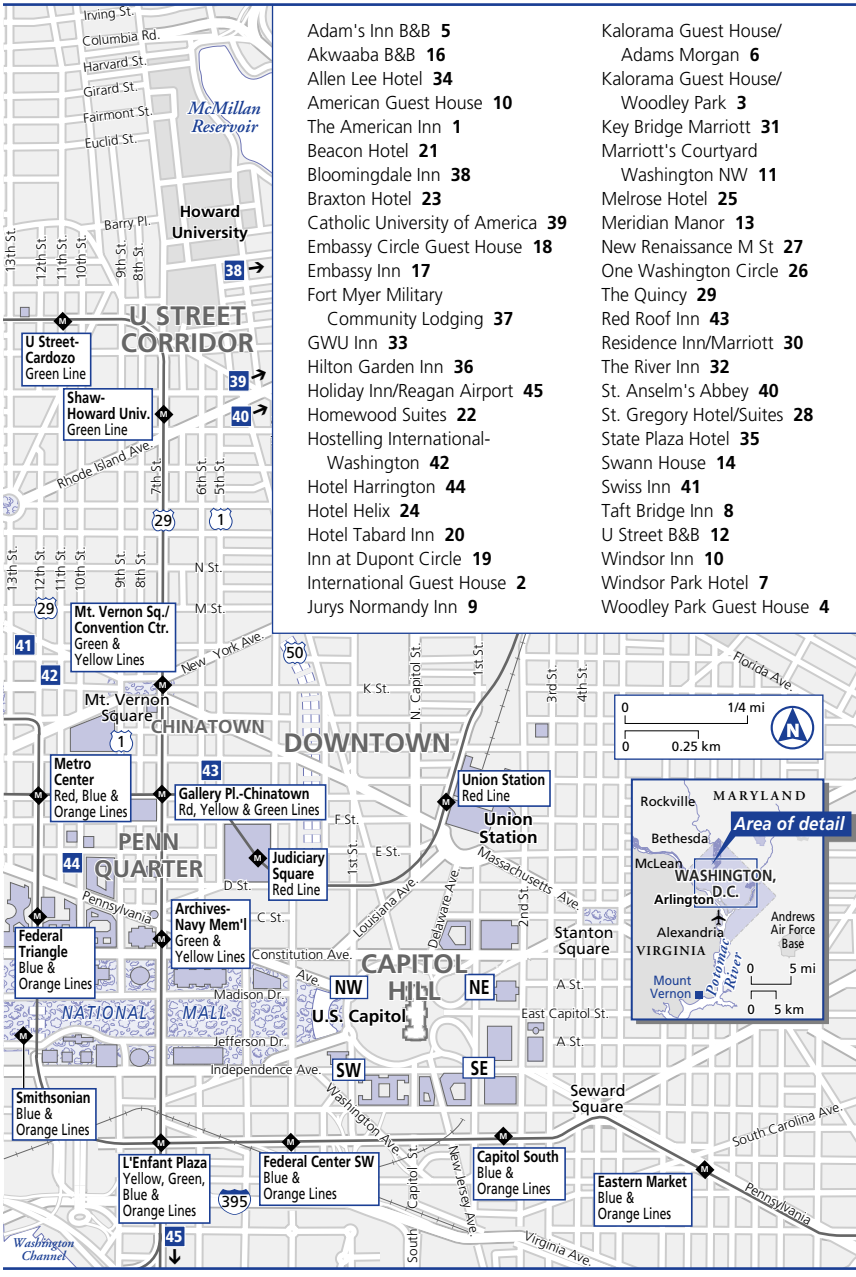
Adams Morgan And Woodley Park

$–$$ Sherry in a cut glass decanter is available at all times of the day and night and in the afternoons either lemonade or hot cider with cookies is put out for the enjoyment of guests. All old-fashioned pleasures, appropriate as the 29-room **Kalorama Guest House at Adams Morgan** (1854 Mintwood Place NW; ☎ 800/974-6450 or 202/667-6369; www.kaloramaguesthouse.com; Metro: Dupont Circle and Metrobus [42] [H2]; limited parking $15; AE, MC, V) is a sepia-toned charmer. As in so many D.C. lodgings, the house is Victorian (built in 1910), but here the illusion that you've jumped back in time is enhanced by the dozens of oval-framed photos of someone's ancestors on the walls and the dim lighting (yes, it's light bulbs, but it feels like candle-light for all the good and bad that implies). Occupying three town houses, the inn sits on a quiet, upscale neighborhood street that is a 5-minute walk from the restaurants and nightlife of Adams Morgan. Once you get into the rooms, the beds, nightstands, headboards, carpets, the works are all brand-spanking new, having received a complete overhaul in late 2006, so you will have the modern comforts (except TVs that is; you'll have to go to the common room for that). Rates too are a bit old-fashioned at $85 to $95 a night for a room with a shared bath and $110 to $120 for a private bath. The largest bathless rooms (my pick if you're trying to save) are numbers 6 and 15; some of the rooms with private facilities are just as large (though more expensive, ask for details when you call). Kalorama also rents out several rooms in neighboring buildings, including one large suite with sitting room, kitchen, and bathroom for $120 to $135 a night and a couple of bathless two-room suites, good for large groups, at the same rates. By the way, all of these prices include a hearty breakfast of hard boiled eggs, bacon, danishes, yogurt, fruit, and waffles you can pop into a toaster (plus coffee, tea, and juices of course). The friendly hosts also stock the latest magazines and shelves of board games to keep guests amused (and making it feel even more like you're visiting a favorite aunt). On warm nights, a number of guests might gather in the garden out back for their sherry, sitting at one of the umbrella tables. From March to June and September to December—the high season—a 2-night minimum stay is required on weekends. No elevator.

$–$$ The rooms are a bit larger and the prices a little higher, but you will find the same pleasant attributes of its sister property at the 18-room **Kalorama Guest House at Woodley Park** (2700 Cathedral Ave. NW; ☎ 800/974-9101 or 202/328-0860; www.kaloramaguesthouse.com; Metro: Woodley Park-Zoo/Adams Morgan; limited parking $15; AE, MC, V). Rates are $95 to $110 for a room with a shared bath; $110 to $150 for a private bath. Those rates include the same

Washington, D.C. Accommodations





Adam's Inn B&B **5**
Akwaaba B&B **16**
Allen Lee Hotel **34**
American Guest House **10**
The American Inn **1**
Beacon Hotel **21**
Bloomingdale Inn **38**
Braxton Hotel **23**
Catholic University of America **39**
Embassy Circle Guest House **18**
Embassy Inn **17**
Fort Myer Military Community Lodging **37**
GWU Inn **33**
Hilton Garden Inn **36**
Holiday Inn/Reagan Airport **45**
Homewood Suites **22**
Hostelling International-Washington **42**
Hotel Harrington **44**
Hotel Helix **24**
Hotel Tabard Inn **20**
Inn at Dupont Circle **19**
International Guest House **2**
Jurys Normandy Inn **9**
Kalorama Guest House/ Adams Morgan **6**
Kalorama Guest House/ Woodley Park **3**
Key Bridge Marriott **31**
Marriott's Courtyard Washington NW **11**
Melrose Hotel **25**
Meridian Manor **13**
New Renaissance M St **27**
One Washington Circle **26**
The Quincy **29**
Red Roof Inn **43**
Residence Inn/Marriott **30**
The River Inn **32**
St. Anselm's Abbey **40**
St. Gregory Hotel/Suites **28**
State Plaza Hotel **35**
Swann House **14**
Swiss Inn **41**
Taft Bridge Inn **8**
U Street B&B **12**
Windsor Inn **10**
Windsor Park Hotel **7**
Woodley Park Guest House **4**

generous breakfast, and the afternoon "welcome home" snacks. I liked Room No. 6, a second-floor haven with private bath and a private balcony (with chair swing) overlooking the quiet, tree-shaded street ($110–$120). Near the Zoo and a cluster of good restaurants, the inn is also much closer to a metro stop than the Adams Morgan property. The light, cheery breakfast room has the look of an outdoor Parisian cafe. The same 2-night weekend stay requirement applies, and there's no elevator.

$–$$ I don't think I'm going out on the limb to write that one of the best deals in town is the 26-room **Adam's Inn Bed & Breakfast** ★★ (1746 Lanier Place NW, 1 block west of 18th St. and Columbia Rd.; ☎ 800/578-6807 or 202/745-3600; www.adamsinn.com; Metro: Woodley Park-Zoo/Adams Morgan; limited parking $10; AE, MC, V). I've reviewed budget-priced lodgings for years, but few offer so many pluses: bright, serene guest rooms (with hardwood floors and billowing white curtains); two comfortable reading rooms; dedicated management and a great location—and at a bargain price. The rate for one person is $99 with shared bath; $109 with private bath. (All 10 shared-bath rooms have an in-room sink.) For two, it's $109 for a shared bath; $119 with private bath. Children age 2 and under stay free. Continental breakfast is included; tea, coffee, and cookies are temptations anytime. The inn sits on a shady residential street, a block back from the heart of Adams Morgan, maybe Washington's hottest nightlife scene. That should please clubbers. For families, the National Zoo is a 15-minute walk away. Rooms are scattered among three neighboring Victorian buildings that underwent a complete renovation in 2002. The place still looks fresh and inviting. Two church pews serve as front porch benches, a nice spot to enjoy evening breezes, or doze in the sun in the rear garden. Of course, "budget" means a lack of certain amenities, such as no in-room phones or TVs. You will find them in the public rooms. They also put plastic covers on the mattresses, which I always find to be a turn-off (it's worth removing them and remaking the bed, so you don't sweat all night). And no elevator will lift you to the second or third floor. Rooms vary greatly in size with some big enough for four or five guests and others on the smallish (but not cramped) side. I like room no. 302, with its lovely throw rugs.

$–$$$$ I'd love to say "Why look farther? This is the place for you" when discussing the 18-room **Woodley Park Guest House** ★★★ (2647 Woodley Rd. NW, a half-block west of Connecticut Ave.; ☎ 866/667-0218 or 202/667-0218; www.woodleyparkguesthouse.com; Metro: Woodley Park-Zoo/Adams Morgan; limited parking $14; closed mid-Dec for 2 weeks; AE, MC, V). But because it's so justifiably popular, it's often fully booked weeks or months in advance (hence the rest of this chapter!). What's the appeal? Sparkling fresh rooms, light and cheery and adorned with original artwork (usually done by former guests), and quality furniture culled from local antique stores. It enjoys a prime location, half a minute from a metro stop, close to the National Zoo, and lots of inexpensive ethnic restaurants nearby. Quiet evenings (no TVs or radios are on the premises) and modest rates are the words of the day here. A collection of friends, who first met at a prayer breakfast, pooled their money together and refurbished the three-story brick structure in 2001, installing new bathrooms and lovely light maple wood floors throughout. Seven rooms share baths; they're the cheapest with bathless singles going for $95. Rooms with private baths start at $140 for one or two guests.

The nicest room, no. 122, features a large bay window looking across the street to the garden entrance of the Marriott Wardman Park, a major convention hotel. Room no. 105 ($140) is quite airy and comfortable, too. Room no. 125, the single/shared bath at $95, reminded me of my college dorm in its size (not decor). "City-sized" is how co-owner Laura Saba, a Washington native, describes the rooms. I'd call them small, but because occupancy is always limited to two guests per room and young children are not accepted, size may not matter as much. Rates include a continental breakfast (the usual pastries and bagels plus a tasty homemade fruit salad) at which you'll meet one of the owners. They rotate who's on duty and are an intriguing lot, with one of the owners a specialist in malaria control in Africa, another, a Lebanese immigrant and contractor. Thanks to the participation of the owners, breakfast can feel more like a chatty dinner party.

$$–$$$ Backpackers still show up expecting a hostel at the **American Guest House** (Adams Morgan, 2005 Columbia Rd. NW, just off Connecticut Ave.; ☎ 703/768-0335; www.americanguesthouse.com; Metro: Dupont Circle; MC, V). But they've been using an outdated guidebook or website. The hostel was bought, and a renovation in 2005 installed all new bathrooms throughout the house and eliminated the dorm rooms. Although the "bones" of this 1889 town house are elegant—the carved wood staircase, climbing way up to the fourth four (no elevator), is an artwork—the new owners haven't been able to totally purge the hostel vibe. This has mostly to do with the odd decor, a charmless mishmash of Chinese-restaurant-style framed prints on the walls, weird gold-on-purple wall treatments in some of the rooms, and cheap shiny comforters on the beds. I was also distressed to see plastic covers on the mattresses, which can make sleeping a sweaty affair. And guest rooms have no closets; rods attached to the bedroom walls make unattractive substitutes. To be blunt, the place lacks the welcoming ambiance of the other guesthouses profiled in the chapter. The walls upstairs and down are plastered with tacky paper signs with seemingly endless guest dos and don'ts. So why is it included in this guide? Well, the location is convenient, just across the street from the huge Washington Hilton Hotel. Therefore, it draws lots of convention-goers escaping the hubbub (and higher rates) associated with a convention headquarters. To serve them, all rooms feature desks, wireless Internet access, and television sets. And the prices are fair. In December, January, and February, the price drops to $120 to $160, a good rate for what you get. The lowest-price room is in the basement; avoid it. Children under 15 are not admitted. In high season, prices climb to between $150 and $195, including a hot breakfast; I'd think twice before paying those rates for a stay here.

Dupont Circle

$–$$$ First impressions are important, which is why I mentally subtract points (or stars) when passing the 12-room **Taft Bridge Inn** ★★ (2007 Wyoming Ave. NW, a ½-block east of Connecticut Ave.; ☎ 202/387-2007; www.taftbridgeinn.com; Metro: Dupont Circle; limited parking $16; MC, V), a bed-and-breakfast. As I write this, the exterior of the century-old Georgetown mansion—four massive columns support the portico—is in sad need of a paint job. "Uh, oh," you might say to yourself in disappointment as you climb the entrance stairs. Inside, however, it's a 180-degree turnaround. The owner is a Japanese ex-pat, and she has a striking sense of style and color. Each room is painted in the deep, rich tones

you'd find on a fine Japanese kimono. The sitting room, furnished in exquisite Victorian antiques, contrast with lovely modern art works on the walls. Guest rooms (some with private baths, others with shared) are spacious and luxuriously appointed, many with expensive antiques and hand-knotted oriental rugs. The graceful stairway adds another touch of elegance. A room with a shared bath is $75 for one person, $95 for two, and though these shared rooms are smaller and way up on the top floor, they make good use of the space and are quite unique (one all-wood room looks a bit like a cozy hunting lodge). Rooms with private bath range from $139 to $169 per night. The rate includes a full breakfast. The top-priced room, no. 16, features deep purple walls and opens out to a private balcony. I also like no. 17, for its size. Children are not admitted (too many pricey things to break); TVs are in most but not all rooms. The inn's location near embassies and law offices draws lots of business travelers. The lively and sophisticated Dupont Circle scene, a couple of blocks south, should appeal to younger guests.

$–$$$$ The over-arching theme at the **Inn at Dupont Circle** ★ (Dupont Circle, 1312 19th St. NW, between N St. and Dupont Circle; ☎ 866/467-2100 or 202/467-6777; www.theinnatdupontcircle.com; Metro: Dupont Circle; AE, MC, V) seems to be teddy bears and chintz. Which makes sense when you consider that this inn, unlike many of its B&B brethren, welcomes children (it can provide a crib for babies and even stocks booster seats and baby pillows). Kids will enjoy all the toys piled here and there, the wall to ceiling mirrors in some rooms, and the bowls of candy in the bedrooms. Adults may think it's odd, though to be fair, the frill-factor does vary from room to room. A couple are quite pretty and refreshingly lace free. And certainly its Victorian origin has bequeathed it lofty 12-foot ceilings, bay windows, white marble fireplaces, and hardwood floors. My favorite room, displaying all of this, is the front-facing Renoir Room, decorated with Renoir prints. That particular room draws lots of business travelers headed for 19th Street's prestigious law offices; many of them are repeat guests. When I visited, every room was booked by a repeater, an impressive recommendation. Another recommendation is the delish hot breakfast daily—omelets made to order—served (in season) in the tiny backyard walled garden. The single "$" is awarded because the inn's tiny room for one, the Nook (with shared bath), goes for $95 year-around; it's a very popular choice. Off-peak, other rooms (two with shared bath) go for $130 to $150 a night; in peak season, the top price is $215, the other rooms less. A four-story (no elevator) Victorian town house built in 1885, the inn was once the home of astrologer Jeanne Dixon.

$$$–$$$$ It's so new (debuting in late 2006), this guide may be the first to alert its readers to the lovely 10-room **Embassy Circle Guest House** ★★★ (2224 R St. NW at Sheridan Circle and Massachusetts Ave. NW; ☎ 202/232-7744; www.embassycircleguesthouse.com; Metro: Dupont Circle and 5-block walk; AE, MC, V). A three-story red-brick mansion dating to 1902 that has been restored from top to bottom, it once was owned by the Taiwan government and sits in the heart of Washington's Embassy Row area. Next door is the Embassy of Guatemala. With one exception rooms are, well, roomy; each has a brand new private bath with shower (but no tub). Oriental carpets adorn the polished-wood floors, and each is furnished with two comfortable sitting chairs. Otherwise the

decor is sparse; no stuffed teddy bears or mounds of pillows on the beds. Antiques adorn the large guest parlor and the dining room, but bright contemporary art hangs on the wall. Check out the colorful cape, a piece of textile art by Sam Gilliam, one of the city's most noted artists. Innkeepers Raymond and Laura Saba, who live on the third floor, try to create a homey atmosphere; at times willing guests are invited to join them in the sleek kitchen preparing a shared evening meal. Rates are $160 (for the smallest room) to $260 (for the largest) for two people, including an expanded continental breakfast. Slightly lower rates are offered in slow periods. There's a luggage elevator only in the three-story structure, and no television anywhere.

$$$ If a spacious room—make that a huge room—is high on your wish list, then book a stay at the eight-room **Akwaaba Bed and Breakfast** ★★★ (1708 16th St. NW, between R and S streets; ☎ 866/INN-DULJ; www.akwaaba.com; Metrobus [S2] and [S4]; limited parking $10; AE, MC, V). This hip, high-design inn, named for the word for "welcome" in the language of Ghana, offers up some of the largest rooms in Washington—well, the largest I've ever seen. Debuted in 2003, the Akwaaba is the third in a growing collection of upscale inns owned by Washington natives Glenn Pogue and Monique Greenwood, former editor-in-chief at *Essence* magazine. Each has an African-American theme; in Washington, the focus is literary. All different, rooms are named for authors—Zora Neal Hurston, Toni Morrison, Langston Hughes, and Walter Mosley—and types of literature—Romance, Science Fiction, Poetry, Inspiration. The building itself is a well-located (11 blocks from the White House), five-story brownstone mansion, furnished with a mix of antiques and off-beat contemporary pieces. Amenities, including plush bathrobes, seem fitting for a luxury hotel. But rates, depending on the room, range from $150 to $190—a terrific buy for the quality of the accommodations. (The top-priced rooms feature whirlpool tubs in the new, modern bathrooms.) The price includes a full Southern-style breakfast, which could mean chicken and waffles, grits and biscuits. The Hurston room ($190), named for the Harlem Renaissance writer, features a big brass bed, deep red-colored walls, a bay window, and one of those whirlpool tubs. The Mosley room ($165) is painted a rich blue trimmed in black and appointed with copies of the author's detective novels. An old portable typewriter sits on the desk waiting your try for a best seller. Well-behaved children are tolerated.

$$$–$$$$ In summer, pure joy is ending a hot day of sightseeing with a cool plunge into your semi-private hotel pool. For a not-so-outrageous price that luxury can be yours at the 12-room **Swann House** ★★★ (1808 New Hampshire Ave. NW at 17 and S streets; ☎ 202/265-4414; www.swannhouse.com; Metro: Dupont Circle; limited parking $14; AE, MC, V). The key to getting value here is to stick to the half-dozen rooms that cost less than $250. For the best rate, check in during the late summer doldrums, when the pool is especially welcoming. The inn is a delight for the eyes from the moment you climb its front steps. An imposing red-brick Victorian mansion, it sports a multihued tower and gabled roof that earn it my nod as Washington's most attractive lodging—and most unique. Its Dupont Circle neighborhood is full of similarly impressive former mansions, many now housing embassies. Inside the Swann, elegance reigns in the spacious public rooms and the guest rooms. This luxurious setting might cost you $300

more in a ritzy downtown hotel. Here, however, the least expensive room is the Nantucket, a single with bath, priced at $150 to $185, depending on the season. The Shanghai'daway ($165–$195) is a gem—except it's located in the basement and has no windows. A splurge choice would be the Garden Suite, which has a private entrance and a sitting room ($185–$245). Rates include a continental breakfast (hot entree on weekends) and afternoon home-baked cookies and other goodies. Children under 12 not admitted.

U Street Corridor

$$–$$$$ B&Bs have a reputation—sometimes deserved (as at the Inn at Dupont Circle, above)—of being all frills, doilies, and dried flowers. At the **U Street B&B** ✯✯✯ (17th and U St. NW; ☎ 877/893-3233; www.bedandbreakfastonustreet.com; AE, MC, V) and its sister property, the **Meridian Manor** ✯✯ (16th and U St. NW; www.meridianmanordc.com; other info same as at U Street B&B), there's nothing frilly to be found. These lodgings are as sophisticated and even hip as the up-and-coming, restaurant and dance-club heavy U-Street neighborhood they occupy. This is largely due to the efforts of co-owner Yaruslv Koporulin who, when not greeting guests and running the B&Bs, is an accomplished painter. His richly evocative paintings, and the works of other Russian artists (he grew up in Russia), fill each room and because of his finely tuned sensibilities, the sumptuous wall colors, bedding, rugs—indeed anything that has a color—are carefully chosen to work with the art. Beyond being eye-poppingly beautiful, the rooms, especially at the U Street B&B, are quite cozy, with top-quality mattresses on the beds and comfy chairs in each room. When I visited, the Meridian Manor was still a work in progress, the rooms a bit plainer, though the owners made it clear that they'd be upgrading them in 2007. In defense of the Meridian, many of the rooms here are quite large (in fact, they might have been among the largest I've seen in Washington, D.C.); and the third floor of that house, with its two bedrooms and private living room, would be perfect for a family group. About a third of the rooms share bathrooms; these go for $95 to $115 in the low season, up to $135 when the town is busy. The "en suite" rooms (those with a private loo), go for between $100 and $145 in the low season; and $125 to $185 in the high season. One final perk to staying here is an international party at the breakfast table. Because the owners speak a number of languages, they draw guests from around the world.

Bloomingdale

$–$$$ I struggled with including the **Bloomingdale Inn** (2417 First St. NW; ☎ 202/319-0801; www.bloomingdaleinn.com; AE, DISC, MC, V), as its location is a bit, well funky. There are no recommendable restaurants or bars within walking distance, and though the street the Inn is on is safe, some of the surrounding neighborhoods can get a bit dicey. Still, for those going to visit Catholic University nearby, it's convenient; and it's possible to walk 20-or-so blocks to the Mall, though at night you'd want to take a cab, bus, or drive (there's abundant free street parking nearby on a street that has no parking regulations). The two conjoined 19th-century homes that make up the inn have a beguiling history as a former church and parish house; you'll see where the prayer rails once were, and in the "Mt. Bethel" room, the sacristy is now a closet where you'll see an oddly low full length mirror. (It was set at shoulder level so that the priest could check that his vestments were straight without indulging in the sin of pride by looking at his

face.) Each of the nine rooms is different and eclectically designed, so you might have a Tiffany-style lamp here, a statue of Buddha there, and a French crystal chandelier hanging above it all. Sometimes these touches add up to an attractive, harmonious whole (as in the "Samuel Gompers Room"); other times, it looks a bit weird. On the plus side, the staff here are a friendly, helpful bunch who genuinely love their jobs. . . and that goes a long way in the lodgings biz. Plus, the afternoon snacks that are set out—cakes, cookies, and so on—are truly scrumptious. Many of the rooms share baths (and cost between $90 and $130 a night, depending on the season); but there are some en suite options as well.

WASHINGTON HOTELS

Getting hotel managers or desk clerks to reveal their property's best rates is not easy. It may be because they don't know them: some hotels sell blocks of rooms to discounters, which set their own rates. And many managers adjust rates up or down on a daily or even hourly basis, depending on how full they expect the hotel to be. I've tried to provide what is the general range you can expect to pay at each place. But the exact rate depends on the dates of your stay, with whom you booked, and sometimes the position of the stars—you just never know.

Do your homework to save money. Just as for airline tickets, you could be paying more for the exact same room as the folks next door. For example: Management at the St. Gregory Luxury Hotel and Suites, to which I've awarded two stars, told me that the hotel's off-peak rate for a "deluxe" room could start at $115 and go all the way up to $250. I later checked several Internet discounters (see below), getting rates that were even lower, ranging from $107 to $199. Further searches took me to the St. Gregory's website where, for the same dates, I was offered a price of only $89! So shopping around does pay off.

Here are other tips:

- Alternative lodgings, which include hostels, guesthouses, and bed-and-breakfast inns, tend to charge the same rate throughout the year. In peak seasons, therefore, they will give you the best rates.
- A hotel's Internet site may offer cheaper rates or special off-price packages that you won't learn about from a desk clerk. You can do a quick scan of hotel website pricing (for the chain hotels mostly), with such sites as Travelaxe.com and Sidestep.com. Not all hotels, especially small ones, will be listed on these two sites, however, so if you have your heart set on a particular place, go to its site directly.
- And because some hotels sell rooms in bulk to discounters, check such sites as Hotels.com; Hotelbook.com; Quikbook.com; Travelworm.com, and AccommodationsExpress.com before making a move. None of these sources is always the cheapest, so you have to do a little homework. If your trip doesn't coincide with a big convention, you can find some very good rates at many upscale business hotels. If price is the first priority, make a bid on Priceline. You'll end up in some major chain hotel, you just won't know which one until after you've booked. (A helpful site called BiddingForTravel.com will clue you into what travelers have been paying on Priceline recently and which hotels they've been snagging.)
- Be flexible in your travel dates. Travel during off-peak periods (p. 48) and on weekends, when rates are lower.

- And don't be afraid to bargain. Never call the 800 number, though. Instead, call the hotel's local number, ask to speak with a manager, and name your price. Make it clear, in a polite and friendly tone, that you'll go elsewhere if the hotel can't match your price. You'll be surprised at how often this tactic works.
- If you can be flexible with your vacation dates, check rates for several days before and after your preferred dates. A convention may fill the hotel one day, emptying out the next.

FOR YOUR COMFORT AND SAFETY I earned my credentials as an experienced budget traveler in 1972 when I circled the globe with a backpack for the entire year, visiting more than 30 countries and averaging less than $20 a day for everything—including transportation. The most humble lodging I experienced—not really a room—was an open-air cot placed inside a mud wall compound in Kabul, Afghanistan. The cost: about 25 cents a night.

None of the lodgings that appear in this guide comes so spare—or so cheap. Without exception, each place listed in this guide provides decent accommodations (no flop houses), and each is located in a normally safe neighborhood. Sometimes you get what you pay for, so expect cranky plumbing and worn carpeting in the least expensive places, and you won't be disappointed.

Unless otherwise stated, all properties in this list offer some form of Internet link. The pricier places tend to provide an in-room, high-speed DSL connection. Others feature wireless service, but it may be limited to the lobby area. Check ahead if this is important to you.

DOWNTOWN

The advantage of a downtown hotel is its proximity to the Mall and most major attractions. The drawback is that the downtown area tends to empty out at night when the suburban commuters go home, and you will have to go elsewhere for much nightlife.

$–$$ Location, location, location are the three (and primary) reasons, you choose the **Hotel Harrington** (11th and E sts. NW; ☎ 800/424-8532 or 202/628-8140; www.hotel-harrington.com; Metro: Metro Center; offsite parking $10; AE, MC, V). A Washington institution built in 1914 and still owned by the same family, it offers clean, decent rooms at an affordable rate—nothing more, nothing less. In spring, the hotel plays host to school groups—they arrive by the busload; in summer, vacationing families fill its rooms; year-round, it's a favorite with foreign students. As you might expect with all these groups, the place can get a little noisy. But the location—4 blocks from the White House, 2 blocks from the Mall—can't be beat, unless you've got an invite to stay with the President and First Lady. Sure, the yellow-brick exterior is dowdy and the lobby worn. But management has renovated many of the rooms, adding colorful bedspreads, good carpeting, and solid furniture, comparable to what you would find in a new motel. Others had yet to be renovated when I last visited, and they can be a bit depressing—dimly lit, with concave mattresses and scruffy carpeting (if you get one of these, ask to be moved). All rooms have private baths, which are small and sport old-fashioned fixtures and black-and-white tile. But they are kept scrubbed, and any action to replace them probably would jack up the prices—which nobody

wants. Rooms with a queen or king bed go for $99 a night (though I've seen them dip lower); with two double beds (sleeping four), $115; a deluxe family room (sleeping four or five), $155. Room no. 624, a suite with two adjoining rooms, two baths, and two TVs (great for a family of six) is $159. As I write this, the Harrington is adding a new family-friendly, budget-priced restaurant off the lobby called Harriet's Cafe. Display a copy of this guide and get a 10% discount on your room, promises long-time managing director Ann Terry. The Harrington is inexpensive because the owner wants to provide a budget alternative to Washington visitors, not because he couldn't make a bundle refurbishing it from top to bottom and hiking the prices.

$–$$ One way to cut the travel budget is to eat in occasionally. You can do just that at one of the eight efficiency apartments at the little all-efficiency **Swiss Inn** (1204 Massachusetts Ave. NW, between 12th and 13th sts.; ☎ 800/955-7947 or 202/371-1816; Metro: Metro Center; AE, MC, V). The word "apartment" suggests a spaciousness that these efficiencies don't provide. After all, the slender, five-story brownstone claims to be the smallest hotel in Washington. Think instead of a small bedroom (private bath) with a well-equipped kitchen barely squeezed in: full-sized refrigerator; four-burner stove (electric); microwave oven; sink with garbage disposal; table; and cupboards furnished with the necessary implements of preparing and dining. But the price is right. For one person, an efficiency is $89 to $119; for two people, $99 to $129. The top rate is $139, and these higher priced rooms are larger. From November 15 to the end of February, rates drop 30% to 40%. Located downtown on a busy commuter street near the lively Penn Quarter neighborhood, the Swiss Inn has been drawing budget-minded travelers, including families, for 28 years. Many are foreign business travelers on a third-world budget. The place looks a tad weary despite a recent paint job but is otherwise well-kept under longtime manager John Crofoot. Cable TV in every room is a recent upgrade. There are two rooms to a floor; the rear rooms are the quietest, but bay windows give the front rooms a sunnier look and a diverting street view.

$–$$$ I'm going to give an upbeat review of this appealing, budget-priced hotel on faith. As I write, a big, 4-month refurbishing project is underway at the 57-room **Braxton Hotel** (1440 Rhode Island Ave. NW between 14th and 15 sts.; ☎ 202/232-7800; www.braxtonhotel.com; Metro: Dupont Circle; limited parking $19; AE, MC, V). I won't see the results before this guide goes to press, but the plans are impressive. Six blocks from the White House, the Braxton is under new ownership and a new manager, Lawrence Sauger. He radiates excitement as he describes the changes underway at this formerly dowdy property. The small lobby is being expanded by knocking out one first-floor guest room and turning it into a guest lounge. Throughout, rugs, wall coverings, and furniture will be replaced, and all rooms get a coffeemaker and CD player. Sauger, a photography fan, is looking for black-and-white photos of the city to decorate the walls. Completed in 1913, the four-story, yellow-brick building initially housed apartments, and the marble entrance hall and wrought-iron stairway railings are reminders of its fashionable origins. The big drawbacks: The rooms are small, and the old elevator does not function (and is not expected to be fixed during renovation), meaning the hotel is a walk-up. In low season, a single is $79 and a room for two is $89 (double bed) or $l09 (king or two doubles). In high season (mid-March to early

June and early September to early November), a single is $129, and a room for two is $159 (double bed) and $189 (king or two doubles). Continental breakfast is included. The best rooms are the ones facing the front because they have bigger windows. Sauger's rehab goal is to provide a hotel "for people who want to stay in a Sheraton but can't afford it and for people on a budget who want something better than a youth hostel." I think he's going to achieve it.

$–$$$$ As a potential guest, I always consider it a plus if a hotel tells me it has just completed a renovation. By mid-2007, there will be an all-new upbeat look to the 99 suites and minisuites of **The Quincy** ★ (1823 L St. NW, between 18th and 19th sts.; ☎ 800/424-2970 or 202/223-4320; www.quincysuites.com; Metro: Farragut North or Farragut West stations; parking $28; AE, MC, V). The Quincy was known as Lincoln Suites until May 2006, when new owners took over. They immediately began a thorough overhaul of the modest little property, adding a chic look it never had before. As part of the project, they replaced and upgraded the beds and linens. The mattresses are so thick now, short folks like my wife and myself might almost need a footstool to climb into bed. Two types of suites are available, both with kitchenettes. The minisuites (71 total) are furnished with a small refrigerator, microwave oven, and coffeemaker. A deluxe suite features a stove and a large refrigerator. At off-peak times, a minisuite goes for $99 to $129; during peak periods, $139 to $179. Lower rates in each case are for weekends. On occasion, the hotel's maximum rate tops at $259 for a deluxe suite, but that's not too common. As a work in progress when I visited, The Quincy looked well spruced up. The lobby is quite small, stylishly stark in design. Rooms, by contrast, are quite large and attractively decorated with delightful splashes of color—a teal wall, say, contrasting prettily with the tiger lily orange throw pillows on the bed. One warning: avoid rooms that face the alley (unless you think you'll enjoy being woken up at 4am when the dumpster there is unloaded). A prime location, the hotel stands among shops, cafes, and office buildings about 6 blocks from the White House to the south and the nightlife of Dupont Circle to the north. Two other key reasons you may want to pick this one: they supply freshly baked cookies and milk in the lobby every afternoon and provide guests with free passes to the nearby Bally's gym, to work those cookie calories off.

DUPONT CIRCLE

Still close in, the accommodations in this lively upscale neighborhood are close to offbeat boutiques, ethnic restaurants, and a variety of bars and other nightlife—gay and not. It will give you more of a sense of the day-to-day life residents live than the downtown area will.

$–$$$ I include the **Windsor Park Hotel** (2116 Kalorama Rd. NW at Connecticut Ave.; ☎ 800/247-3064 or 202/483-7700; www.windsorparkhotel.com; Metro: Dupont Circle; AE, MC, V) as an option for when the city is fully booked. But truth be told, there are better picks in this chapter. The service here can be curt, and the rooms are gloomy, with hard mattresses, graying blinds instead of curtains, and a bland all-tan decor. True, it's not all bad news, perks include HBO, small fridges in each room, a great housekeeping staff (who keep everything spic and span), and low prices, especially when you go through a discounter. Apparently, Hotels.com, Expedia.com, and Orbitz.com often get

allotments of rooms, and they often drop the nightly rate to as little as $88 for a double. (The desk will try and hit you up for $106 to $179.) Children under 18 stay free in their parent's room. Rates fluctuate based on demand; the hotel gets its top price when a big convention is in town. Whatever its faults, the Windsor Park occupies a choice location for those seeking good nightlife. Bustling Dupont Circle, where the gay and lesbian crowd gathers, is 6 blocks downhill. Uphill 6 blocks is Adams Morgan, the city's hip nightspot.

$–$$$$ If you are looking for a modern, attractive, and conveniently located hotel at a moderate rate make it the 75-room **Jurys Normandy Inn** ★★★ (2118 Wyoming Ave. NW, a ½-block west of Connecticut Ave.; ☎ 202/483-1350; www.jurysdoyle.com; Metro: Dupont Circle; limited parking nearby $23; AE, MC, V). In summer, every front-facing window of the six-story boutique hotel sports a window box filled with bright red geraniums. It's the sort of welcome you would expect in, well, a small hotel in Normandy. The lobby, sitting room, and breakfast room inside are equally charming. Rooms are the standard large, well-kept boxes with tidy baths that Americans expect in a good highway motel but with positively regal beds. Draped in jewel-toned, elegant quilts and featuring plush pillow-top mattresses, they may offer some of the best sleeps in the city. I would ask for a front room overlooking the street for a view of the street rather than the alley, although the rear rooms tend to be quieter. When a big convention is in town, a room for two is priced at $215 to $230. But in late summer and other slow periods, rates can plummet to as low as $79 a night. In 2006, the Jurys' website (see above) promoted a rate of $89 a night "on selected dates" from July to September. From April to June, a busier period, the rate was $109. No charge for children 18 and under staying in their parent's room. These are fantastic rates for a quality Washington hotel in a Dupont Circle location. A continental breakfast, served (if you choose) in a walled courtyard, is $5.95. In summer, Normandy guests have use of the outdoor swimming pool at Marriott Courtyard Washington Northwest, a sister hotel a block and a half away.

$$–$$$$ A Victorian charmer, the 40-room **Hotel Tabard Inn** ★ (1739 N St. NW, between 17th and 18th sts.; ☎ 202/785-1277; www.tabardinn.com; Metro: Dupont Circle; no smoking; AE, MC, V) is the sort of urban retreat you might hope to find in the heart of London: cozy, distinctive, and a bit quirky as befits a lodging that is considered to be the oldest continually operated hotel in the city. Singles with a shared bath go for $103 to $133; doubles with shared bath are $118 to $158. With private bath, a single is $148 to $208; a double is $163 to $223. Continental breakfast is included, but the hotel's restaurant also serves up hot items (for an extra charge). During World War I, three Victorian turn-of-the-century town houses were linked to form the inn. Under threat of demolition in the 1970s, it was rescued by new owners who spruced it up, filled it with antiques and original art, and painted the walls in rich colors. The alterations give the inn an appealingly whimsical look; no two rooms are alike. They are spacious; some are actually junior suites. Room 8, which is gorgeous, provides a sitting area furnished with a couch and two comfortable chairs. Oriental carpets cover the polished wood floors. The public sitting room off the foyer and the pub could have been lifted from an exclusive gentleman's club. The breakfast room (which also serves lunch and dinner) is full of light. The Tabard sits on a quiet side street, but busy

Connecticut Avenue, a major shopping street, is a block away. Continue another block to Dupont Circle, ringed by cafes, bookstores, and funky boutiques.

DUPONT CIRCLE NORTH

On a straight line north from the front door of the White House, these accommodations are on one of the city's loveliest thoroughfares. Their drawback is a longish walk from the Dupont Circle Metrorail station, restaurants, and nightlife. Bus service, however, is excellent, and it's a very short ride to the Mall.

$–$$$ The stately exterior, formal and attractively landscaped, suggests a foreign embassy, several of which are located nearby. And in a way, **The Embassy Inn** (1627 16th St. NW, between Q and R sts.; ☎ 800/423-9111 or 202/234-7800; www.windsorembassyinns.com; Metrobus [S2] and [S4]; AE, MC, V), located on one of the city's most architecturally impressive thoroughfares, plays a small diplomatic role, attracting lots of foreign visitors drawn by its affordable prices. Students, young families, government workers on tight per diem budgets, and other cost-conscious travelers check in, too. A small 38-room hotel, it provides a tidy room with private bath, a continental breakfast, and afternoon sherry. A standard room for one or two—snug, but larger than many I've checked into in Europe—begins at $89, the off-peak rate. The maximum rate for the best room in peak season is $179, but rooms are usually less than that. (I'm almost always able to find rooms there for about $120 to $140 per night.) Up to about $150, you get value for your money; much above that, and I'd opt for something a little nicer elsewhere. Originally an apartment house built in 1910, the Embassy still displays such classy touches as the original marble stairway and mosaic tiles in the entranceway. Take note that the Embassy does not have an elevator. And avoid room no. 303; a single tiny window in the bedroom and bath invite claustrophobia. The hotel's location is central indeed: 16th Street runs almost up to the front door of the White House, 10 blocks south. New ownership was expected to begin refurbishing the hotel, which could mean higher rates. Stay tuned.

$–$$$$ Rather than repeat myself, I could say "ditto" to all of the above. That's because The Embassy Inn has a sibling just 2 blocks up the street, **The Windsor Inn** (1842 16th St. NW; ☎ 800/423-9111 or 202/667-0300; www.windsor-inn-dc.com; Metrobus [S2] and [S4]; AE, MC, V). Same rates, same breakfast, and, yes, similar stately exterior. The major differences are that the Windsor's 46 rooms tend to be larger, and suites are available ($149 to $189). My advice here, as with the Embassy, is to take advantage of the cheaper rates, but skip the higher priced suites (unless you have children and a suite makes sense) and find spiffier lodgings elsewhere if you are going to pay that much. Both hotels are nicely maintained; the paint jobs look fresh, and the hall and guest room rugs look clean. The painted ivy design on the stairwell walls of the Windsor is a cheery touch, but it may wear thin as you slog up a flight or two to your room after a long day on the sightseeing trail. That's right; no elevator here either. Both are definitely budget properties, and you recognize it the minute you walk into their cramped lobbies. On the other hand, you get wireless Internet access, cable TV in the room, and free daily newspapers in the lobby. Europe is full of respectable little hotels like this; Americans, more accustomed to the large rooms and modern bathroom fixtures of a highway Super-8, might be disappointed.

FOGGY BOTTOM

A stay in this neighborhood puts you close to the Kennedy Center, walks along the Potomac River, and the youthful faces of students at George Washington University. You are near numerous restaurants, but other than Kennedy Center attractions you will have to look elsewhere for nightlife.

$–$$ Let's say you're a young budget-traveler. Fancy surroundings count for nothing; you want a clean, safe room that won't eat up your dwindling travel money. The hotel for you is the 88-room **Allen Lee** (2224 F St. NW between 22nd and 23rd sts.; ☎ 800/462-0186 or 202/331-1224; www.theallenleehotel.com; Metro: Foggy Bottom-GWU; AE, MC, V). Providing basic lodging, the hotel occupies an aging structure that might once have been a university dorm. It's not a great place, but I wouldn't recommend it if I hadn't stayed in lots of similar hotels in Europe when I was a young backpacker. It has many strong points. Foremost is price. A single room with shared bath is $69, with private bath $99. A double room with shared bath is $89, with private bath $119. Triples are $99 share, $129 private; quads are $109 share, $139 private. At slow times, the single share rate can drop to $49, with private bath $63. A continental breakfast is included with all rates. The hotel's upscale Foggy Bottom location is ideal for sightseeing; sandwiched between the U.S. State Department and the campus of George Washington University, the Allen Lee is just 3 blocks from the Lincoln Memorial and the Mall. In March 2006, it reopened after a 6-month shutdown for refurbishing. The interior paint job, carpeting, room furnishings, and (in some rooms) the bathroom fixtures are all new. Initially, the idea was to shut the hotel permanently and build expensive condos on the prime site. But the condo market took a hit, so the hotel will be around for a few more years. Another important plus: General manager David N. Jones impresses me as someone who cares about the Allen Lee; he sees that the place is kept clean and the guests are happy. The drawbacks are tolerable: small, cramped rooms all but filled by futon-type beds and the cable TV set; cranky plumping that breaks down periodically (and is quickly repaired); and a seedy looking exterior in desperate need of painting and landscaping.

$–$$$$ The U.S. State Department, a news headliner almost nightly, sprawls just across the street. Which, of course, explains the perhaps puzzling name bestowed on the **State Plaza Hotel** (2117 E St. NW between 21st and 22nd sts.; ☎ 800/424-2859 or 202/861-8200; www.stateplaza.com; Metro: Foggy Bottom-GWU; parking $24; AE, MC, V). So many visiting diplomats flow in and out that it seems almost like a mini–United Nations at times. An all-suite hotel, this attractive, well-kept 279-unit property offers State Room Suites featuring a bedroom with two double beds and fully equipped kitchen and larger Plaza Suites, which also have a sitting room. On the roof is a sun deck with spectacular views, there's also a decent fitness center and on-site cafe for snacks. At times, the State Rooms go for as little as $69 a night, but more commonly the rates range from $99 all the way to $225. You're most likely to snag the cheapest rates on summer weekends. Forget about checking in during much of the month of May. Located on the southern edge of the campus of George Washington University, the hotel fills with friends and relatives of graduating students then. Less than a 10-minute walk from the Kennedy Center, the hotel is a great place for visitors who want to take

Off-Peak Specials at Swank Hotels that Beat the Budgets—Sometimes

When Congress is out of town for its August and year-end holiday break, many of the city's big business hotels cut rates substantially. If you're going to be visiting during these periods, here's your chance to upgrade yourself at an affordable price. The following hotels charge as little as $99 to $115 a night during slow periods, for rooms that go for over $200 a night when Congress is in session or the Cherry Trees are blossoming.

Beacon Hotel ★★ (1615 Rhode Island Ave. NW at 17th and N sts.; ☎ 800/821-4367 or 202/296-2100; www.beaconhotelwdc.com; Metro: Farragut North; valet parking $24 weekdays, $18 weekends; AE, MC, V). "Our rates change every 30 minutes," management tells me. So it goes at this new and spiffy 197-room property. Aimed at business travelers, the Beacon rejected corporate bland and went for a jazzy contemporary style of offbeat colors and furnishings with pizzazz (think flat screen TVs, large leather-like headboards, and boldly striped coverlets). The excellent downtown location puts you 4 blocks from the White House.

George Washington University Inn (824 New Hampshire Ave. NW between H and I sts.; ☎ 800/426-4455 or 202/337-6620; www.gwuinn.com; Metro: Foggy Bottom-GWU; AE, MC, V). You'll see lots of college student trooping in and out of this charming 95-room boutique hotel, but they're only visitors. The paying guests are their parents. Owned by George Washington University, it has a lot of pluses: extra-large guest rooms and suites, many with kitchenettes; Colonial Williamsburg-inspired decor; and a quiet location on a shady street near the Kennedy Center.

Hilton Garden Inn (815 14th St. NW, between H and I sts.; ☎ 877/STAY-HGI or 202/783-7800; www.hiltongardeninn.com; Metro: McPherson Square; parking $26; AE, MC, V). The 300 rooms here are spacious and attractively decorated, with such niceties as usable desks, ergonomic chairs, and adjustable lighting. The swimming pool and small fitness center are a big bonus. And 3 blocks from the White House, the Hilton is in the heart of downtown.

Homewood Suites by Hilton ★★ (1475 Massachusetts Ave. NW at 15th and M sts.; ☎ 800/CALL-HOME or 202/265-8000; www.homewoodsuites.com; Metro: Farragut North; parking $20; AE, MC, V). The Homewood houses 175 attractive mini-apartments with all the modern conveniences. A sitting-room with a pull-out couch shares the "front" room with a small kitchen equipped with two-burner electric stove, tall refrigerator, and a fully stocked cupboard. Included in the nightly rate (which has been known to drop to $129) are hot breakfasts in the lobby cafe and, Monday through Thursday, a modest dinner. The convenient downtown location puts you 3 blocks from Dupont Circle's many restaurants; the White House is a 7-block walk. Check the website for discounts.

Hotel Helix ★★ (1430 Rhode Island Ave. NW between 14th and 15th sts.; Metro, Dupont Circle; ☎ 800/706-1202 or 202/462-900l; www.hotelhelix.com; parking $26; AE, MC, V). Decidedly sexy, the Helix is a deluxe boutique hotel with vivid Hollywoodesque decor, a hip clientele, and 178-rooms. Expect bright colors, sheer drapes around the platform beds, and decent rates in summer. (As little as $95/night, go for the for "Hot Dates-Great Rates" promotion for greater savings.)

Marriott Courtyard Washington Northwest ★ (1900 Connecticut Ave. NW at T St.; ☎ 800/228-9290 or 202/332-9300; www.marriott.com; Metro: Dupont Circle; no smoking inside; valet parking $20; AE, MC, V) in the Dupont Circle area is a charmless nine-story rectangular box, but it offers predictability. Standard rooms are spacious and furnished with a desk and a comfortable chair in which to relax. In summer, the outdoor pool is a welcomed extra.

Melrose Hotel (2430 Pennsylvania Ave. NW between 24th and 25th sts.; ☎ 800/MELROSE or 202/955-6400; www.melrosehotel.com; Metro: Foggy Bottom-GWU; parking $28; AE, MC, V). Antiques, polished brass, thick carpets, and lots of gleaming marble give an upscale European look to this 220-room beaut. And there's more: a knowledgeable concierge, bellmen to assist with the luggage, terry cloth robes—and maybe most importantly—big rooms with big windows the length of the room and a pair of comfortable chairs in which to relax. The boutiques and nightlife of Georgetown are an easy 4-block walk.

The River Inn ★ (924 25th St. NW between H and I sts.; ☎ 800/424-2741 or 202/337-7600; www.theriverinn.com; Metro: Foggy Bottom-GWU; AE, MC, V). The rooms, all suites (sleeping up to four), are large and decorated with flair and color. The walls display evocative photos of the historic Chesapeake & Ohio Canal, which begins its 185-mile path to western Maryland just 2 blocks away. Low season rates can drop as low as $99 but, says management, you are apt to find off-peak rates almost any time of the year, if only for a couple of days at a time.

St. Gregory Luxury Hotel and Suites ★★ (2033 M St. NW at 21st St.; ☎ 800/829-5034 or 202/530-3600; www.stgregoryhotelwdc.com; Metro: Farragut North; parking $19; AE, MC, V). A lovely 154-room property, it has the amenities of a Ritz-Carlton or Four Seasons—state-of-the-art fitness center, concierge, 24-hour business center, chi chi olive and gold rooms with high-quality bedding and furniture—for a lower price tag. The St. Gregory's downtown location puts you in easy walking distance of Georgetown and the White House.

When Washington's Rooms Are Cheapest

Hotel rates drop when the U.S. Congress leaves town on one of its lengthy recesses. When the nation's legislature is gone, not much is happening, and the otherwise heavy influx of business travelers dries up. Hotels go begging for guests.

The two major slow periods are late summer, from about mid-July to the first week in September, and mid-winter, from late November (about Thanksgiving Day) to the first of February. August, of course, is summer vacation time for the legislators; December and January is the year-end holiday break.

Weather-wise, both off-peak periods can be uncomfortable. August is steamy—but, of course, that's when families with kids can travel. December and January can be frigid or balmy. It's a gamble. Generally though, December is milder than January. But pack for rain, drizzle, ice, and snow.

The most difficult times to get a room, budget or otherwise, is during Presidential Inauguration week every 4 years and during the annual Cherry Blossom Festival in late March and early April. For the date of the next festival, check the festival website at www.nationalcherryblossomfestival.org. It also maintains a "blossom watch" that provides updates on when the trees will be at their peak beauty. Bus-, plane- and trainloads of students pour into the city in April and May, filling up nearly all of the city's lower priced rooms. In fall and spring a big convention may fill up the city's pricier rooms, but you should be able to find a bed-and-breakfast inn or guesthouse with availability. To find out if your planned trip coincides with a big convention, check the website of the Washington Convention Center (www.dcconvention.com; click on "Events Calendar;" enter the dates of your proposed visit). Don't be concerned if the event is drawing only 1,000 attendees; the big conventions are what fill the hotel rooms and these attract 15,000 to 20,000 or more.

in a performance. The Lincoln Memorial and the National Mall are just down the hill.

$$–$$$$ How do you choose among Washington's many downtown all-suite hotels, all roughly in the same price range? Answer: Check out the extras and, yes, even the decor. An outdoor swimming pool and contemporary flair (plus good rates) recommend **One Washington Circle** (1 Washington Circle at Pennsylvania Ave. and 23rd and K sts.; ☎ 800/424-9671 or 202/872-1680; www.thecirclehotel.com; Metro: Foggy Bottom-GWU; parking $22; AE, MC, V). Owned by George Washington University, as is another suites hotel described later in this chapter (George Washington University Inn) One Washington Circle is less expensive and three centuries more recent in style. Modern art on the wall and a royal blue inlaid

tile slash across the lobby's white marble floor proclaim the flair that is duplicated in the guest rooms. The hotel houses 151 suites, but the most affordable are 18 studios dubbed Guest Quarters. Quite spacious, the preferred studios feature a queen bed, a large comfy sofa, and a separate kitchen—equipped with a four-burner stove, microwave, and large refrigerator. Other studios offer two double beds. Large double-paned windows and a walk-out balcony give rooms an open, sunny look. Ten years ago, the building was converted from an apartment building, which accounts for the roominess; it was last renovated in 2002. Among the nice extras are an on-site fitness center and restaurant (along with the pool I mentioned above). In low season, a Guest Quarters suite, which can sleep four, generally goes for $139 to $179 (but sometimes as low as $109); in high season, $169 to $229. Add $20 for an Executive Suite with a separate sitting room; an additional $40 for a Grand State Room with a separate dining room. The hotel overlooks Washington Circle, site of a historic equestrian statue of America's first President. The White House is 6 blocks east; lively Georgetown, 6 blocks west.

LOW COST SPECIALTY LODGINGS

ACTIVE AND RETIRED MILITARY The military doesn't make it easy, but active duty and retired military personnel and accompanying family members can enjoy comfy lodgings at a budget price from **Fort Myer Military Community Lodging** (Building #50, 318 Jackson Ave., Fort Myer, VA; ☎ 703/696-3576 or 703/696-3577; www.fmmc.army.mil/sites/newcomers/lodge.asp; Metro: Rosslyn and 25-minute walk; AE, MC, V). This office handles rentals at Fort Myer, which is adjacent to Arlington National Cemetery in the Virginia suburbs, and at Fort McNair, which overlooks the Potomac and Anacostia rivers in southwest Washington. Fort Myer provides 18 one-bedroom apartments at $67 a night and 13 one-bedroom suites with separate sitting room for $122 a night. Fort McNair provides 25 guest rooms; a single with shared bath is $53, with private bath $57. A one-bedroom suite is $67. Additional guests are $3. That's the good news; now for the bad. These rooms are difficult to get from Monday to Thursday, when personnel on official business take priority. Even if you snag a 1-night rental, you may not get a second night, or if you do, you may have to change rooms. Availability eases on the weekend. And you can usually check in for all 3 nights—Friday, Saturday and Sunday. To get a room, you must call the reservation desk at 6am the day you want the room, and then you must check back at 2pm to see if a room is free. On weekends, you go through this procedure only once; on weekdays, you must do it every day. Another hassle: Whether you're staying at Fort Myer or Ft. McNair, you must check in at Fort Myer, Building #50. It's not impossible to do this by metro; I suggest using the metro and taxis. But if you have heavy luggage, a taxi all the way is the most practical solution. Restaurants are located within walking distance of both facilities.

Lodgings at both Fort McNair and Fort Myer are in carefully preserved historic structures. The two-story red brick building at Fort Myer sports a colonial look; Fort McNair's three-story is unprepossessing. But the interiors of both are furnished quite elegantly, as befits the expectations of visiting generals who often stay in them, and they are kept inspection-ready spic and span. Also at both, you are a short walk from dining, a swimming pool, and tennis courts. Fort McNair maintains a nine-hole golf course.

UNIVERSITY STAYS Washington's five major universities open their residence halls in summer to interns with confirmed employment or to visitors in the city temporarily for an educational purpose. All require a minimum stay; usually four or five weeks. The school with the least restrictive rental policy is **Catholic University of America** (620 Michigan Ave. NE; ☎ 202/319-5200; http://conferences.cua.edu/summer; Metro: Brookland-Catholic University). Catholic University requires only a 7-day stay for single or double dorm room with a shared bath; the rate is $29 a night for a single and $25 per person for a double. Apartments with shared bath require a 3-week minimum stay; the rate is $35 single and $30 double per person. Rooms are open to anyone with an educational purpose.

MONASTERY RETREATS On a limited basis, male and female guests can stay for a few days in one of the eight guest rooms at **St. Anselm's Abbey** (4501 S. Dakota Ave. NE, Washington, D.C. 20017; ☎ 202/269-2300; www.stanselms.org; e-mail at dcabbey@erols.com; Metro: Brookland-Catholic University; closed Aug). The abbey, located on 30 landscaped acres, welcomes guests interested in the "Rule of Saint Benedict," meaning someone seeking a balance in life achieved by prayer, work, and leisure. All retreats are private and individual—no formal programs—but guests may take part in religious ceremonies. A priest is available if you request a talk. Male accommodations are in single rooms with private or shared bathroom. Most are in a Tudor-style structure with a half-timbered front built in the 1930s. Rooms line an upstairs hallway in the monastery. They are very modest, and simply furnished with bed, desk, and a chair or two. A shared bathroom is down the hall. A maximum of two women can share the Canterbury Suite, which has a parlor, bedroom with one or two beds, and private bathroom. The suggested offering is $30 a day, which includes meals. "It's the cheapest room in town," points out Fr. Hilary, the Guestmaster. Breakfast at 6am and lunch at 12:20pm are served cafeteria-style. Dinner at 6:30pm is a formal meal with the monks. Sixteen monks reside in the monastery, which conducts a day school for boys from grades 6 to 12. Some monks teach at nearby Catholic University. For reservations, contact the Guestmaster via mail or e-mail (see above). The monastery prefers to take in guests who have come for contemplative reasons rather than simply for inexpensive lodging.

HOSTELS

$ Unless you hole up with family or friends, you aren't going to find anything much cheaper that also is as tidy and safe as the **International Guest House** (1441 Kennedy St. NW, between 14th and 16th sts.; ☎ 202/726-5808; Metrobus [S2] and [S4]; MC, V). It doesn't call itself a hostel, but that's what it is—sort of. You share a two-person or three-person room (bath down the hall) with strangers. Or you and your spouse can have the room to yourself. But unlike many hostels, there are no bunks, and a continental breakfast is included in the price. And the price—I'm tearing open the envelope now—is $30 per person. For children (with parents) under 15, it's $15. Children younger than 4 stay free. Drawing (but not limited too) lots of young foreign travelers, the guest house is a "mission" of the Allegheny Conference of the Mennonite Church USA. All staff members, which include a resident hosting couple, are volunteers who also stay here. Sleeping a

maximum of 15 guests, the lodging occupies a spacious three-story yellow brick house in a middle-class neighborhood in upper northwest Washington. Sprawling Rock Creek Park, a block away, offers a 25-court tennis center and free summer concerts at the Carter Barron Amphitheatre. Though the rates are just slightly cheaper than the downtown Hostelling International Hotel, the guesthouse is a much homier place. So what's the catch? You're at least a 20-minute (non–rush hour) bus ride from the White House; a bell awakens you at 7:20am for a group breakfast at 8. You must vacate your room and the bathrooms from 10am to noon for cleaning; on Sunday, it's 9am and the place shuts down entirely until 3pm so the staff can attend church. What else? You've got to make curfew; the guesthouse locks up at 11pm.

$ Don't like the International's fringe location? For a couple of bucks more per night, check into the considerably less homey hotel operated by **Hostelling International–Washington** (1009 11th St. NW between K and L sts.; ☎ 202/737-2333; www.hiwashingtondc.org; Metro: Metro Center; AE, MC, V). It's a 270-room hive of young humanity. For 2 years I served on the Board of Directors of this hostel, so I got to know it reasonably well. Squeezed into an aging high-rise, it's no star on the hostelling trail. Rooms are small, hallways cramped, and from the moment you enter you feel like you're in a swarming crowd. The more than compensating pluses are clean rooms and baths, a generally amiable staff, a daily roster of freebie or off-price tours and entertainment, a large guest lounge (for meeting and mingling), and some of the cheapest rooms in town. For non-hostel members, a dorm bed is $32. Friends or families can share a room with four beds for $35 or $36 a night per person. A private room for one person is $82; for two people, $92. Members get a few bucks off these rates. Bathrooms are down the hall. The hostel borders on the hot, happening Penn Quarter neighborhood. Only a few years ago, the area was in decay. But the debut of Verizon Center, a nearby sports arena, changed everything. Now the hostel, just 5 blocks from the White House, stands among gleaming new glass and steel office and apartment buildings. Only one sad derelict remains; unfortunately it's right next door, and the hostel can't do anything about it—having tried for years.

4 Dining Choices

Great meals at an affordable price, plus where to find a quick bite on the Mall

ONE OF THE LESSER-KNOWN ADVANTAGES OF LIVING IN OR VISITING THIS international capital is that Washington is graced with an unusually wide choice of ethnic restaurants—Mexican, Turkish, Chinese, Spanish, Belgian, Malaysian, Persian, Indian, Ethiopian, you name it—which tend to be inexpensive and satisfying. Many, if not most, are run by immigrants who now make Washington and its suburbs their home.

My hope in the line-up of restaurants below is that you will try a cuisine that is foreign to you. One of the pleasures of traveling is digging into new foods. In this town, you've got the opportunity to sample lots of new cuisines from around the world. Yes, I understand that some readers are less adventurous and may not like hot, spicy dishes, or have dietary restrictions that may limit their culinary adventures, so I've included a number of places serving all-American menus, both innovative and traditional. Want meat loaf instead of braised veal cheeks? Fear not—you can find both in the city.

How have I chosen these restaurants? I sought out neighborhood restaurants, the places where those of us who live in Washington go for dinner. Dining in Washington can be expensive, so I focused on affordable restaurants, including a couple that are definitely for travelers on tight budgets. And, importantly, I winnowed the list to include places that consistently rate high with diners, food critics, as well as my friends and neighbors. If you were a guest in my house, these are the restaurants my wife and I would introduce you to.

In addition, Pauline Frommer, creator of this series and a frequent traveler to Washington, D.C., has added her choices to the chapter. You'll find them scattered in boxes throughout the text.

What Pauline and I don't do is send you to chain restaurants or notoriously touristy restaurants, such as the Hard Rock Café, where the teen-packed tour buses unload. (Okay, if you have a teen in tow, it's at 999 E St. NW.)

A few more tips before we delve into the restaurants themselves:

- The busiest time for restaurants is 7 to 8:30pm. The theater crowds show up at 6pm, and a few diners—often Europeans—arrive at 9pm. Restaurants tend to empty out by 10pm. A few keep their doors open for the post-theater diners, but Washington isn't really a night-owl city for diners. Two exceptions are The Diner, an all-night eatery (p. 71), and Eat First, a Chinese restaurant open until 3am on weekends (p. 67).

- Some higher-end restaurants feature a pre-theater, fix-priced menu from 5 to 6:30 or 7pm. Usually, it includes salad or other starter, entree, and dessert for less than you might pay later for salad and entree alone. Among them, Chef Geoff's-Downtown (p. 64) and Rasika (p. 68).
- Only a few snooty restaurants, such as 1789 in Georgetown, require male guests to wear jackets. Otherwise dress is casual but certainly not sloppy. Yes, you probably could get seated in almost any of the restaurants I recommend wearing a T shirt, cutoffs, and sandals. But management wouldn't be happy, and you would look out of place.
- As of Jan. 1, 2007 city law bans smoking in restaurants, taverns, nightclubs, and bars. Outdoor seating is exempted from the ban.
- A 15% to 20% tip has become standard, with 20% gaining the edge for better-than-average service.

A word on dining districts: Let's say you want to find a place on your own, a serendipitous, do-it-yourself find. Many fine, budget-conscious restaurants are clustered in commercial/shopping/nightlife areas. Here's where to go hunting on your own:

- **18th Street NW north from S Street to Columbia Road** (Adams Morgan; Metro: Dupont Circle). Inexpensive ethnic restaurants, including Ethiopian.
- **8th Street SE south from Pennsylvania Avenue** (Capitol Hill; Metro: Eastern Market). A mix of chic dining spots and beer and burger pubs.
- **M Street NW from 30th to 34th streets** (Georgetown; Metrobus [30], [32], [34], [35], [36], K Street Circulator bus, or the Georgetown Blue Bus from the Foggy Bottom or Dupont Circle Metro stations). High rents mean high menu prices, but budget diners will find burger/BBQ/pizza options also.
- **U Street NW from 13th to 9th streets** (U Street Corridor; Metro: U Street-African-American Civil War Memorial/Cardozo). Stylish new eateries that have kept prices under control.
- **7th Street NW from D to I streets** (Penn Quarter; Metro: Archives-Navy Memorial/Penn Quarter). Family dining in a blossoming theater, movie, and arena sports neighborhood.
- **14th and P streets NW, 1 or 2 blocks north, south, and west** (Logan Circle; Metro: McPherson Square). Small, stylish restaurants with innovative menus to serve the new condo units mushrooming in the neighborhood.
- **19th Street NW between L and N streets** (Downtown; Metro: Farragut North). Lots of expense-account dining but choices for you too. Once this short strip was prime dining country, but the hot, hip places have moved to U Street, Penn Quarter, and Logan Circle.
- **H Street NW from 7th to 5th streets** (Chinatown; Metro: Gallery Place-Chinatown). Chinese and other Asian restaurants one after another.

$: Most entrees under $8
$$: Most entrees from $9–$14
$$$: Most entrees from $15–$20
$$$$: Entrees above $20

DINING ON THE MALL—WHERE TO MAKE THE MOST OF YOUR LIMITED TIME

If you're like most visitors to Washington, especially as a first-timer, you're going to be spending much of your day at the museums, monuments, and memorials on the National Mall. Though located in the heart of the city, it's something of a separate enclave, surprisingly remote from the rest of the downtown area. Your choice of convenient lunch places is, as a result, limited to what's available on the Mall.

Very few of the eateries here serve up much in the way of gourmet food, but you will find a varied selection. When you're short of time and you've got a long list of places to visit, what you're really looking for is convenience. And that you'll find as every major museum will have its corresponding food court or sandwich shop. The cheapest lunch is at the **National Archives' Charter's Café** (p. 108)—its hot dogs cost only $1.20, which is less than the street vendors charge. Kosher meals are available at the **U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum's Museum Café** (p. 112). Located in a separate building behind the museum, the cafe offers Kosher soups, sandwiches, panini, and salads in a quiet setting.

Another option, often even less pricey, is the **Mall kiosks and street vendors.** These modest, neatly designed food stalls are operated by a National Park Service concessionaire and are scattered conveniently up and down the Mall. You just step up to the window to place your order and then enjoy your lunch picnic-style on outdoor tables or on the grass. It's the fastest way to eat and get back to the museums. I don't often eat hot dogs, but the Chicago-style dogs ($4.75) served at these places make for a filling and tasty meal. They are served up on a bun with onions, tomatoes, peppers, pickle relish, and mustard. You'll find these kiosks—open daily weather permitting—next to the **Carousel at the Castle;** in front of the **National Museum of Natural History;** in front of the **National Museum of American History;** in front of the **National Air and Space Museum;** to the right of the **Lincoln Memorial** (as you descend the stairs from the Lincoln statue); and on the **Ellipse behind the White House.** **Vendor wagons** line up on streets adjacent to the Mall. They offer items such as a plain hot dog ($1.50), Polish sausage in a bun ($2.50), chili dog ($1.75), slice of pizza ($2), can of soda ($1). But I recommend a kiosk hot dog over a vendor's because kiosks provide shady seating, and the food is better.

Most museums serve carry-out lunch from 11am to 2pm or sometimes a little later. (A full description of each museum, with address, phone number, and website appears in Chapter 5). At several, it is possible to purchase wine or beer.

For something that approaches gourmet, I'd recommend the following eateries:

$–$$ The newest of the Mall's eateries, the **National Museum of the American Indian's Mitsitam Native Foods Café** ★★★ (p. 118) is trying—and succeeding, actually—to make lunch a learning experience reflecting the nature of the museum itself. Visitors are treated to a sampling of Native American foods from throughout the Western Hemisphere. It can be a real eating adventure, with everything from fry breads to smoked duck to honey coated beets. From the Great Plains, for example, you could try a sizzling "campfire buffalo burger" ($5.85); from South America, go for the somewhat spicy chicken tamale in a corn husk

Food Courts, Another Lunch Option

This is where the city's worker bees down inexpensive lunches while their bosses frequent the expense account steak houses, maybe with a member of Congress as a guest. Most food courts are tucked into the lower level of office buildings, and the convenience is popular with the city's office workers. They are generally open earlier and later than the museum eateries. At a typical site, you have a choice of menus offered at individual stations: deli, Cajun, Chinese, pizza, sushi, chili, salads, pasta, hamburgers, desserts, and more.

- **Union Station** (Capitol Hill; Massachusetts and Louisiana avenues NE; Metro: Union Station; Mon–Sat 9am–9pm, Sun 9am–7pm) maintains perhaps the city's largest food court with more than 30 stalls spread out on two levels. Eat here if you are visiting the U.S. Capitol, the Supreme Court, the Library of Congress, or the National Postal Museum.
- **Ronald Reagan Building and International Trade Center** (North of the Mall; 14th Street NW between Constitution and Pennsylvania avenues; Metro: Federal Triangle; Mon–Fri 7am–7pm, Sat 11am–6pm, Sun noon–5pm) offers a choice of 18 stations in classy polished marble surroundings. Lunch here if you are visiting the White House, the White House Visitor Center, the National Aquarium, the Washington Monument, and, when it opens, the National Museum of American History.
- **Eat at National Place** (Downtown; 13th and F streets NW; Metro: Metro Center; Mon–Fri 10:30am–7pm; Sat 11am–5pm) offers pick-up dining beneath a huge vaulted skylight. Lunch here if you're visiting Ford's Theatre, the National Museum of Women in the Arts, the American Art Museum, the National Portrait Gallery, and, if it ever re-opens for tours, the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

($7.25); salmon cakes and fire-roasted salmon cooked on a plank (both for $15) are the tasty choices from the Pacific Northwest. In addition, there are MesoAmerican foods, dishes from the Northern Woodlands and Columbia Plateau, each offered up at handsomely appointed food stations strung with pots and flashing with grill fires. Since it opened, I've had lunch several times, and the food has always been flavorful and intriguing. If I'm anywhere near at lunchtime, I come here.

$–$$ You get the best outdoor view while lunching at the gallery's **Sculpture Garden Pavilion Café** (p. 106), which overlooks the garden's large pool and many contemporary sculptures. The menu's nothing special—pizza, panini, and salads—but the view more than makes up for the somewhat bland fare.

Picnic and Go

The Mall and Washington's many parks lend themselves to picnicking. The choicest spots are along the Potomac River—for example behind the Roosevelt Memorial in West Potomac Park.

First choice for prepared sandwiches or sandwich fixings with soft drinks, chips, and cookies is **Marvelous Market** (www.marvelousmarket.com). It's well-known for its ultra-fresh organic ingredients, made-from-scratch breads, and its fair pricing. Marvelous Market has four convenient locations:

- Dupont Circle, 1511 Connecticut Ave. NW; ☎ 202/332-3690; daily 8am to 9pm.
- Georgetown, 3217 P St. NW; ☎ 202/333-2591; Monday to Saturday 8am to 9pm, Sunday 8am to 8pm.
- Penn Quarter, 730 7th St. NW; ☎ 202/628-0824; Monday to Friday 7am to 8pm, Saturday to Sunday 9am to 5pm.
- Downtown, 1800 K St. NW; ☎ 202/828-0944; Monday to Friday 7:30am to 7pm.

Another option is the New York–based gourmet deli and food purveyor **Dean & Deluca** (3276 M St. NW; ☎ 202/342-2500; www.deandeluca.com; daily 10am–8pm), which offers a chi chi take on picnic goods—think smoked salmon paired with dill, or roast beef slathered in horseradish sauces. The only problem with Dean & Deluca (as opposed to Marvelous Market) is that though its fixings are deluxe, the sandwiches are often made well in advance and can taste a bit stale every once in a while.

Keep in mind, if you tote a lunch bag to any of the museums on the Mall, you will have to open it for inspection. Plan to picnic on a day that you are visiting the open-air memorials, where no security checks are made.

$–$$ On a cold or rainy day, the best indoor view is at the **National Gallery of Art's Cascade Café** ★ (p. 104), located in the tunnel that links the East and West buildings. Just beyond a soaring glass wall, a cascading fountain plunges down a mini mountainside like a waterfall. Serve yourself at an attractive food court featuring a half dozen food stations.

$$$ The most chi chi (and expensive) Mall luncheon is served at the **National Gallery of Art's Garden Café** ★★ (p. 104). A tablecloth drapes the table, and you sit beneath the polished marble of a Grecian rotunda. The buffet ($18) features such dishes as zucchini frittata, grilled calamari, roasted guinea hen, and arugula salad. I've always found the food surprisingly good; if you're a real foodie (but still want convenience) go here.

FEDERAL CAFETERIAS Many federal departments on or near the Mall operate cafeterias or food courts. The food isn't great (standard American hot dishes, burgers, pizzas, and sandwiches), but that's not really why you are here. Once you've got your tray and table, take a look around. Bureaucrats are much maligned throughout the country—unjustly, I think—as uncaring paper shufflers or overpaid guzzlers at the federal fountain. This is your chance to learn the truth first hand—one way or the other. Engage some in conversation over the table; find out what they do; ask about their most rewarding accomplishment. If your interest comes across as sincere, you should get a congenial response. Many of the federal departments on or near the Mall operate cafeterias or food courts that serve moderately priced fare. Once you have passed through the security check point, you are welcome to lunch with the workers who keep the government running.

You have many options, so why not lunch at a federal agency where the work it handles is of major interest to you?

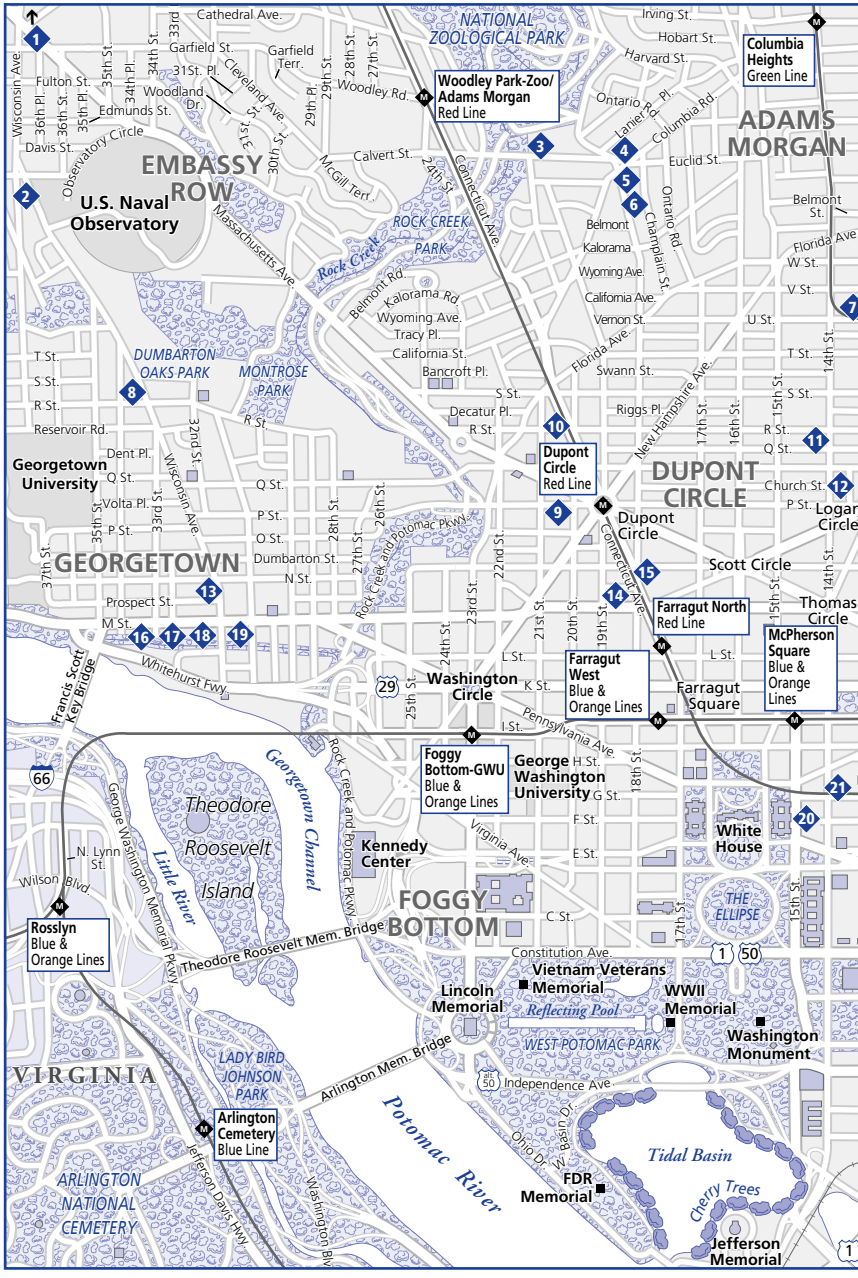
- **U.S. Supreme Court** (First Street NE between East Capitol Street and Maryland Avenue; Metro: Union Station). For lawyers, law students, and fans of justice.
- The **Longworth House Office Building** (South Capitol and C streets; Metro: Capitol South); **Rayburn House Office Building** (South Capitol Street and Independence Avenue; Metro: Capitol South); or **Dirksen Senate Office Building** (First Street and Constitution Avenue NE; Metro: Union Station). All the politics (and politicos) you can stomach.
- **Department of the Interior** (1849 C St. NW; Metro: Foggy Bottom) and **Department of Agriculture** (14th and Independence Avenue SW; Metro: Smithsonian). For environmentalists.
- **Department of Transportation** (400 7th St. SW; Metro: Federal Center). Ever had an airline lose your luggage or delay your flight? Gripe about it to your tablemate here.
- **Department of Labor** (200 Constitution Ave. NW; Metro: Judiciary Square). Are you a union member? Let your tablemates know.

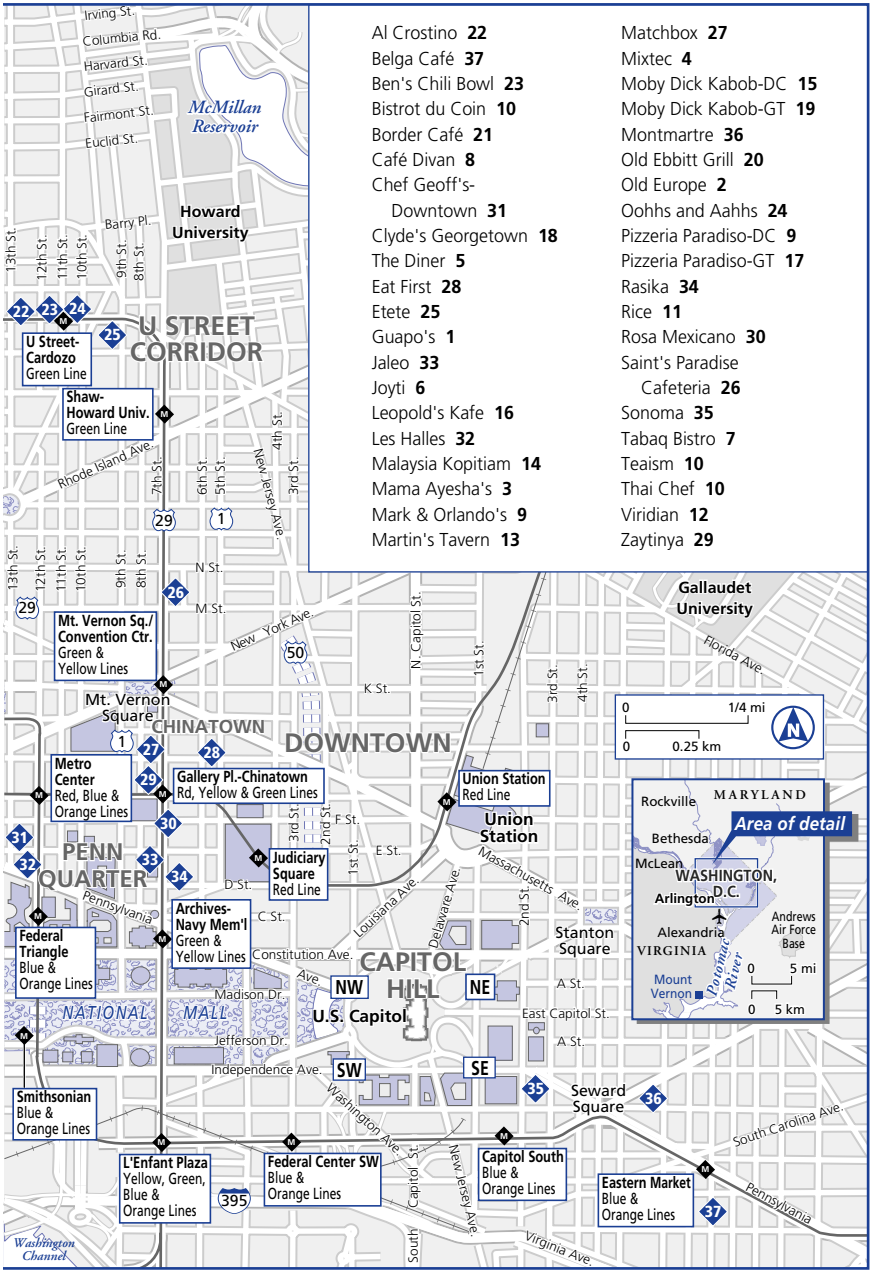
CAPITOL HILL

Though the U.S. Capitol soars high above, this really is mostly a residential neighborhood—albeit an upscale one with folks who love to wine and dine. Tastes are sophisticated if not all that adventurous up here, meaning that you'll be served top quality ingredients in fairly standard preparations (the exceptions would be the restaurants mentioned below). Come here for romantic dining in trendy cafes occupying lovely old row houses.

$–$$$$ Your best bet for spotting an after-work senator or representative is at a restaurant just a hop and a skip from the U.S. Capitol, **Sonoma Restaurant and Wine Bar** ★★★ (223 Pennsylvania Ave. SE at 2nd Street; ☎ 202/544-8088; www.sonomadc.com; Metro: Capitol South; reservations recommended; AE, MC, V). Occupying a slender row house, which means a long, slim dining area, its style is cool contemporary—wood, stone, brick, and slightly antiseptic silver tones. If you're alone, dine comfortably at the long, stone-topped bar. As you might expect from the name, the emphasis here is on good tipples, so the wine list features 40

Washington, D.C. Dining





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On Capital Hill, Pauline Frommer Recommends . . .

$–$$ Talay Thai ★ (406 1st St. SE at D Street SE; ☎ 202/546-5100; Metro: Capitol South). Just an encyclopedia's toss from the Library of Congress (well, maybe it's a little farther than that), this Thai bistro is a bit of an odd duck. Its mismatched decor mixes somberly elegant wood-paneled walls with plastic tables splashed with day-glow colors in a tie-die pattern. Its clientele ranges from congressional aides in serious suits to protesters in sloganeering t-shirts. And its menu hits all the Thai classics—curries, satays, yum salads, you name it—but Americanizes the tastes, making the sweets a bit sweeter, the hot stuff less fiery, the sour elements less tongue curling. Usually, I'd pooh pooh this sort of treatment, but here, strangely, it works. Order a satay ($4.95) and it will come with a peanut sauce so pleasingly sugary you'll be tempted to dip everything in the table in it. Go for the Pad Thai ($7.95–$8.95), and you won't need the slice of lime that usually accompanies it: the noodles are al dente and the flavors are just sour and just sweet enough to carry the dish without that usual splash of citrus. Try a spicy dish, such as a double starred green curry ($8.95–$12), and your tongue won't fall off. Instead, you'll taste the many levels of flavor in this creamy, satisfying stew. Add to all this a kindly waitstaff, willing to walk Thai-food beginners through all the options; quick service; some of the lowest prices in the area for a sit-down meal; a convenient location; and you have an excellent alternative to the bland food courts right off the Mall (at least for when you're on this end of the Mall).

$–$$ For those who don't like Thai, **Tortilla Coast** (400 1st St. SE at D Street; ☎ 202/546-6768; www.tortillacoast.com), just next door, serves up no-frills but flavorful Tex-Mex in a funky dinerlike setting (think lizard statues and lime green walls). The margaritas are potent. You can expect to get out of here paying between $7.95 and $9.95 for an entree, up to $13 if you get all fancy and do a sizzling fajita platter. Like Talay Thai next door, it's quick, cheap, cheerful, and jammed with politicos.

wines by the glass. Fresh ingredients are obtained from farmers and fishermen in nearby Maryland, Virginia, and Pennsylvania. Entrees priced at $8 to $21 feature innovative American/Italian dishes such as diver scallops with herbed spaghetti squash and turnip greens ($17); lightly sweet pumpkin cavatelli with forest mushrooms and rich truffle butter ($13); black risotto with seared calamari and prosciutto ($12); or grilled flank steak with creamy potatoes, kale, and salsa verde ($21). Those with lighter appetites can share a charcuterie or cheese plate ($8 to $21, but the $21 half charcuterie can easily feed three) and get down to the serious business of wine tasting. In fair weather, outdoor tables overlook Capitol Hill bustle.

$$–$$$ In Brussels, one dines on steamed *moules* and *frites* (mussels and French fries), and in this capital we do so also at **Belga Café** ★★ (514 8th St. SE at E & G streets; ☎ 202/544-0100; www.belgacafe.com; Metro: Eastern Market; reservations recommended; AE, MC, V). The look is minimalist Belgian—small, tightly packed tables in a sleek white room, a busy open kitchen, lots of bustle—but the menu is a mix of typical Belgian dishes (lots of sauces with beer) and what the restaurant calls Eurofusion—a blend that adds Asian ingredients. I stick with the classic Belgian dishes, as they're generally more successful than the fusions. Try the Waterzooi, a classic fish stew with vegetables in a savory anise cream sauce ($20) or tomatoes stuffed with shrimp over a bed of greens ($9). I've tried them several times, and they've always been top-notch. But usually when I dine here I remember a pot of steamed mussels I relished in Brussels, and relive a memorable moment from travels past. *Moules* with a choice of five different preparations are $17. The accompanying *frites* are just as crispy and moist as you get in Belgium. The 40 varieties of beer, including some Belgian Trappist brews rarely found in the U.S., are another big draw here.

$$$–$$$$ When a Capitol Hill shopkeeper learned I was writing a guidebook, she escorted me out of her shop and led me down the street virtually by the hand, all but ordering me to write something about the best restaurant on the Hill. Quite a recommendation for **Montmartre** ★★★ (Capitol Hill, 327 7th St. SE at C Street; ☎ 202/544-1244; Metro: Eastern Market; reservations recommended; AE, MC, V), the quintessential French bistro transplanted into Washington. Crowded, noisy, a little chaotic, it's exactly the sort of charming little cafe you hope to find in Paris. Though French phrases are tossed around, English is spoken and in a friendly, accommodating manner. Most entrees are under $20 and are part of traditional French repertoire—liver, rabbit, duck. On the lighter side, I suggest either the herbed risotto with shrimp or the pan-seared sea scallops with roasted asparagus, chick pea pancakes, and red pepper coulis ($20). More sophisticated palates won't go wrong with braised rabbit leg ($21).

DOWNTOWN

For most, the Downtown area is not a destination dinner spot. It's filled with such comforting old stand-bys as grills and steakhouses—places where locals can drop by after work and visitors can hit before the curtain rises on the theaters in the area. There are a few restaurants, however, that set the bar a bit higher.

$–$$ Yes, the kitschy thatched roof over the bar is hokey, but if you ignore this and focus on the authentic, ample, intriguing, and somewhat spicy Malaysian fare at **Malaysia Kopitiam** ★ (1827 M St. NW between 18th and 19th streets; ☎ 202/833-6232; Metro: Farragut West; AE, MC, V) you'll come away surprised that this tasty cuisine isn't more widespread in the U.S. And the decor gets better too—once you step past the bar, the kitsch vanishes, and you settle into a booth ringed by more authentic looking Malaysian artifacts. Malaysian cuisine is characterized by the extensive use of chili and coconut milk. Typically, you order a sort of stew of meat, fish, chicken, or vegetables, and you spoon it out onto a plate of rice. I once visited Malaysia and India in the same month; though both serve a lot of curries, I found Malaysia dishes less searing on the palate than the Indian. On

In the Downtown Area, Pauline Frommer Recommends . . .

$$–$$$$ Teatro Goldoni ★★★ (1909 K St. NW at 16th Street NW; ☎ 202/955-9494; www.teatrogoldoni.com; Metro: Farragut West; AE, DC, DISC, MC, V). But not during the popular dinner hour. Come at lunchtime, sit at the handsome bar, and you'll be able to sample the cuisine of award-winning chef Fabrizio Aielli (he was named a James Beard Foundation Star Chef of the Year in 2002) for just $13. That buys you a plate of Venetian-style pasta (think seafood and peppery spices) and a glass of fine wine. Considering that entrees at the dinner hour can hit $40, and that's before the vino, this counts as a downright steal. At certain times of the year, Aielli also runs an "early bird" special, which cuts the cost of a three-course dinner (appetizer, entree, and dessert) to a not-too-bad $30 when diners arrive between the hours of 5 and 7pm. It's the perfect pre-theater choice, especially as the setting here is so theatrical: with a *Carnevale* theme, the room is bedecked with vintage masks, colorful streamers, large murals, harlequin photos, and in the center of the restaurant—center stage, really—a glass enclosed kitchen where you may just see the master chef at work. Spectacular food and an even more spectacular setting make this a top "special occasion" choice.

my most recent visit, I popped in for lunch. The place was packed, but I was seated quickly and a waiter appeared promptly. A fan of curry, I ordered the Malaysian curry chicken, large chucks of chicken floating in a tomato-red broth of sweet coconut milk and chili and other spices ($11). Verdict: Very flavorful, mildly hot. It was nicely complemented with a pot of jasmine tea ($2). The Assam Curry, served with the fish of the day, blends chunks of pineapple with bell pepper in a spicy sweet and sour sauce ($14). Other recommended dishes include the refreshingly tart *assam tambal* shrimp ($13) in a sauce of red onions and peppers; and the massive veggie salad ($6.95) which combines seemingly unrelated foods—hard boiled eggs, apples, lettuce, red onions, parsley, lemon grass dressing—into one harmonious heap.

$$–$$$$ Downtown Washington doesn't exactly qualify as a "neighborhood," but you do get a neighborhood feeling at **Chef Geoff's-Downtown** ★ kids (13th Street NW between E and F streets; ☎ 202/464-4461; www.chefgeoff.com; Metro: Metro Center; reservations recommended; AE, MC, V). For one thing, the menu is comfy American with just enough innovative tastes to make it seem quite special. Chef Geoff Tracy honed his neighborly manner with his first Washington restaurant, a distinctly neighborhood place uptown he opened in 1999 near American University. Now his time is divided between three restaurants (all very popular), but he still makes time to work the tables at whichever he happens to be at. A Georgetown University graduate, Tracy and his wife Norah O'Donnell, chief

Washington correspondent for MSNBC and a contributing correspondent for the "Today" show, are one of Washington's young celebrity couples. At his downtown restaurant, you can get a great Bistro Burger for $9.95, an individual pizza (sometimes called a "stone pie" on the menu—only Chef Geoff knows why) for $13. But I keep going back for the entrees ($14–$22), which change seasonally. A regular repeat (my wife's favorite) is perfectly roasted chicken breast, served on a heaping mound of couscous, apples, raisins, and Madras curry ($18). I tend to go for the salmon in its seasonal variations. Most recently, it was billed as "lowlands spiced salmon"—grilled salmon that came atop a bed of Carolina creamy white cheddar grits and a black strap barbecue sauce ($18). Friends rave about the Chesapeake shellfish stew, which someday I may be convinced to try despite my unreasonable aversion to fish stews. Wines by the glass (a full 25 choices, moderately priced) and beer on tap (12) are a perk that keep my neighbors returning to all of Geoff's cafes. The three-course, pre-theater dinner, served from 4 to 6:30pm, is $26. (You must order by 6:30pm).

$$$–$$$$ Paris on the Potomac? You might think so. **Les Halles** ★★ (1201 Pennsylvania Ave. NW at 12th Street; ☎ 202/347-6848; www.leshalles.net; Metro: Federal Triangle; reservations recommended; AE, MC, V) is lively and noisy; waiters scurry about in a harried rush, and the voice that greets you sports a French accent. Note the pressed-tin ceiling, wood floors, and (in season) sidewalk seating. You're dining tonight at a "traditional" French brasserie that looks and tastes like the real thing. The menu (in French and English) would not be thought out of place in Paris: *Cassoulet* ($22, the classic French bean stew made here with duck, duck sausage, and bacon—yum!); *Poulet roti*, *frites* (roast chicken with fries, $16); *Moules, frites* (mussels with fries, $18). But no matter how often I tell myself to order something different, I always go for the steak, *frites,* and salad, a classic Parisian plate ($17). This is the cheapest decent steak dinner in town. The three-course, pre-theater menu (5:30–7pm) is priced right at $18. And unlike many other D.C. eateries, Les Halles stays open until midnight. Take the youngsters; you know how the French love kids. The restaurant is a branch of Brasserie Les Halles in New York City, home base for celebrity chef-at-large Antony Bourdain.

$$$–$$$$ On this side of the Atlantic, Washington's equivalent of a traditional brasserie is also the city's oldest saloon, dating back to 1856, **Old Ebbitt Grill** ★★ (675 15th St. NW at F Street; ☎ 202/347-4800; www.ebbitt.com; Metro: Metro Center; reservations recommended; AE, MC, V). Unfortunately, the original building nearby no longer is standing. Today's new Old Ebbitt faces the White House and Treasury Department, drawing after work staffers from both—as well as K Street lobbyists, Washington old-timers, and my wife and myself on occasion. Political clout rings your booth, and you may spot a famous senator or other dignitary. Dark mahogany, polished brass, gleaming marble, and stuffed animal heads over the bar (perhaps bagged by Teddy Roosevelt) give it the look of a distinguished 19th-century men's club, the kind where power deals get done over a juicy New York strip steak ($24). Antique gas chandeliers dangle overhead, and deep green velvet lines the booths and banquettes. It's a Washington fixture with lots of history—past Presidents as imbibers at the bar—and a classic American menu featuring fresh ingredients at reasonable prices ($14–$24). The menu

Family-Friendly Options

Visiting families flood the city in summer, and restaurants are generally quite welcoming. Some provide high chairs or booster seats on request, create children's menus, and hand over a box of crayons to keep the youngsters occupied until dinner is served.

Among the top places to take the kids:

- **Café Divan** (p. 76) serves exceptional, authentic Turkish food. You can smell the spices as you walk in the door and the background music adds an exotic note that will transport young imaginations to the East.
- **Chef Geoff's-Downtown** (p. 64) is a neighborly place, despite its downtown location, with an American menu that offers something—burgers, pasta, pizza—for even the pickiest eater while parents can try something more sophisticated.
- **Clyde's of Georgetown** (p. 77), a bustling American-style pub, delights aspiring athletes with the sporting prints splashed across its walls. The menu—steaks, burgers, pizza, pasta—is very kid-friendly.
- **Guapo's** (p. 79) is filled with families enjoying favorite Mexican dishes, low prices, and a fiesta ambiance.
- **Rosa Mexicano** (p. 68) is big, noisy, and colorful—a sort of three-ring circus to entertain the kids (and dampen the sound of any squawks from a cranky toddler).
- **Yanni's Taverna** (p. 78), the type of cheery neighborhood place where waiters will joke with your kids and the effusive owner hugs longtime customers as they enter, is perfect for an after-zoo meal. (It's a quick stroll from the gate.) The simple, yet rich Greek food is positively addictive.

changes daily, but I can usually find a variation of my favorite dish—pan-seared wild Alaska salmon, served with a white bean salad ($19). When I crave meat, I hope for the roast rack of pork, accompanied nicely with saffron rice and a dollop of walnut chutney ($16).

PENN QUARTER/CHINATOWN

Penn Quarter has a mixed personality. On the one hand, it's a place for pub grub and other casual dining as the restaurants here do a big business with pregame crowds at the Verizon Center, a huge sports arena. Adjacent Chinatown, a modest commercial enclave, is lined with Chinese restaurants, most moderately priced. But in recent years, the neighborhood has also become a magnet for up-and-coming chefs, those toque-hatted fellows featured in the glossy local magazines for shaking up D.C. with innovative cuisine and cutting edge restaurant design. In fact, I think it's fair to say that Penn Quarter now has the greatest concentration of innovative, foodie-friendly restaurants in Washington.

$–$$ It had been awhile since I'd dined in Chinatown, a favorite spot for a night out among budget-minded Washingtonians. So I asked my neighbor, who was born and educated in China, for her favorite Chinatown eatery. Her choice was the improbably named **Eat First** ★ (609 H St. NW; ☎ 202/289-1703; Metro: Gallery Place-Chinatown; Sun–Thurs open until 2am, Fri–Sat until 3am; AE, MC, V). She considers its Cantonese menu the most authentic. On our initial visit, my wife and I savored an excellent, inexpensive meal that was definitely an international experience. And we haven't changed our opinion on subsequent visits. On each occasion, most of the other diners appear to be Chinese. The restaurant is small and as plain—or bland—as a small town bus station. Flimsy paper napkins hardly suffice when combating juices dripping from Moo Shu Pork wraps ($9.95). But the menu, in English and Chinese, is lengthy; servings are enormous (that first time we shared two dishes but now know that one is plenty for the two of us); and the waitstaff is prompt and friendly. Main dishes range in price from $9.50 to $13, with a couple of more expensive items such as the excellent fan tailed shrimp ($14), a grease-free but crisp preparation, that I've seen called "salt baked" elsewhere. One of my favorite dishes is the combination of chicken and beef filet mignon sautéed with snow peas and apples, which at $15 makes for a flavor-filled combination.

$$–$$$ One of the areas latest hot spots, **Matchbox** (Penn Quarter, 713 H St. NW at 7th Street; ☎ 202/289-4441; www.matchboxdc.com; Metro: Gallery Place-Chinatown; AE, MC, V) is a favorite of a young, after-work crowd. If there's a big game at the nearby Verizon Center, expect a wait for a table. Matchbox features all-American pub food and Americanized Italian grub in a long, narrow, brick-walled room with spacious booths and banquettes on two levels. Its chief strong points are its wide selection of quality microbrews and its crisp, wood-oven fired pizzas with lots of cheese. They range in price from $9 to $15, depending on size and toppings; they easily feed two. Entree salads, burgers, and sandwiches are about the same. Dinner entrees, though, are what really attract me here. Try the honey-glazed, pecan-crusted chicken served with spinach and yummy mashed sweet potatoes ($15). Far healthier, of course, and just as tasty is the grilled salmon with asparagus ($18). ***Note:*** Don't get confused by the Chinese characters on the awning—you're in the right place. Because the restaurant is technically in Chinatown, it's required to have them to fit in stylistically with its neighbors. But there's not a wonton or spring roll in sight.

$$–$$$ Mediterranean *mezze* (small plates similar to Spanish *tapas*) have become very popular in Washington. The jazziest of the newcomers, looking something like a chic Las Vegas Strip eatery, is **Zaytinya** ★★★ (Penn Quarter, 701 9th St. NW at G Street; ☎ 202/638-0800; www.zaytinya.com; Metro: Gallery Place-Chinatown; reservations recommended; AE, MC, V). Ceiling-to-floor windows look out onto a vibrant street scene, and inside it's all hustle and bustle beneath bright splashes of color. Mezze featuring the flavors of Greece, Lebanon, and Turkey range from about $4 to $7.50 each, and three is plenty for one person; a couple might order five to share. The sea scallops with yogurt dill sauce ($7.25) are outstanding as are the fried mussels smothered in a smoky walnut sauce ($7). Balance the seafood dish with grilled pork, served with an orange rind sausage and a bean stew ($5.25) or a plate of Turkish-style cured beef ($4). The

fattoush salad—a crunchy salad combining toasted pieces of pita bread and chopped romaine lettuce, parsley, mint, cucumber, and tomato tossed with lemon juice, olive oil, sumac, salt and pepper—($5.75) is very (I mean it) filling. Order a basket of herbed breads to share and you'll be set. Note that the plates arrive at the table in no special order and may come one or two at a time as the kitchen turns them out. This can be a little unsettling to those used to orderly courses. But consider it your own private buffet. It's a unique experience.

$$–$$$ Spanish *tapas* preceded *mezze* to Washington, and *the* restaurant that sparked their local popularity, I think, was the always lively **Jaleo** ★★ (480 7th St. NW at E Street; ☎ 202/628-7949; www.jaleo.com; Metro: Archives-Navy Memorial; reservations recommended; AE, MC, V). Sure, you can order a regular dinner; entrees range from $11 to $17, but what fun would that be? Be daring and go with a small plate feast instead. Again, unless you are a hearty eater, a trio of *tapas* ranging in price from $4.25 to $8.50 should be satisfactory. On the wild side, dig into Spanish anchovies with nectarines ($5.25), an offbeat marriage of tart and salty that somehow works. Also excellent are the date and bacon fritters ($4.95). Combine one of these with the not quite so daring boneless rib of pork with slow-cooked peppers ($7.25). Make the third a satisfying plate of fried potatoes in spicy tomato sauce ($4.25). The flan, the Spanish custard-like dessert, is superb. I speak with some authority here; I lived in Santiago, Chile for a year, eating flan almost nightly. Big windows look out onto the street, but it's often the passersby peering in at the bright colors and festive scene. *Jaleo* is a Spanish word for "commotion," "revelry" or "merrymaking." Whatever your choice, it's an apt description of the scene at night after the pitchers of sangria begin emptying.

$$$–$$$$ An import from New York City, **Rosa Mexicano** ★ kids (575 7th St. NW at F Street; ☎ 202/783-5522; www.rosamexicano.com; Metro: Gallery Place-Chinatown; reservations recommended; AE, MC, V) is a high-end place with an exuberantly colorful, even theatrical, decor. Entrees range from $17 to $26, but you may be too dazzled by the bright blue-tiled wall, the orange and red chairs, and the splashing fountain to care. It's become a hot place to see and be seen. Fortunately, the decor doesn't overshadow the food, which is excellent. I especially like the *Pescado a la Veracruzana,* a roasted seasonal white fish served with a Veracruzian sauce of roasted tomatoes, sweet peppers, olives, and crepes ($24), which I first tasted one night in Veracruz itself. On the negative side: my wife finds the place too noisy, and the pushy waitstaff always seems determined to get us to order more than we want.

$$$–$$$$ Since its opening in 2005, **Rasika** ★★★ (Penn Quarter, 633 D St. NW at 7th Street; ☎ 202/637-1222; www.rasikarestaurant.com; Metro: Archives-Navy Memorial/Penn Quarter; reservations recommended; AE, MC, V) has been one of the "in" places to dine, attracting numerous local luminaries, such as Washington's new mayor, Adrian Fenty. (He came here soon after his election to celebrate.) Ropes of ruby-colored glass dangle overhead, a nod to Indian decor. But otherwise it's a modern, minimalist setting, leaving you free to concentrate on the food, which deserves your full attention. Created by Bombay ex-pat Vikram

In Penn Quarter, Pauline Frommer Recommends. . .

$$–$$$$ Zengo ★★½ (781 7th St. NW; ☎ 202/393-2929; www.modernmexican.com; Metro: Gallery Place/Chinatown; AE, DISC, MC, V). Okay, I wouldn't say I'm a groupie for Mexican chef Richard Sandoval, but whenever I head into a city that boasts one of this prolific restauranteur's places, I make a breadline, er beeline, for it. Each one is different, but they share one common strand: an egalitarian menu. Hidden among the higher-priced entrees are always several bargain dishes, and oddly enough, they often prove to be the tastiest fare of the lot. That's certainly true at Zengo where the Carnitas Rice Noodles ($12) is a star dish, a sinful mélange of long Asian noodles, soft boiled egg, oh-so-tender pork shoulder, and hot and sour sauce that create a dish that's beyond rich—it's the Midas of noodle dishes. I also swoon for the meal-sized "Give 'N Take Chicken Salad" ($10), a crispy mix of chicken, candied pecans, fine lettuces, and cabbage, lightly tossed in a zesty ginger and *piloncillo* (an unrefined Mexican brown sugar) dressing. And folks who like to try several smaller plates can easily make an affordable meal, mixing some won ton tacos (nearly raw ahi tuna with sushi rice, mango, and ginger, $11) with a heaping plate of *edamame* ($4). As you might have noticed, the menu jumps continents, combing the flavors, ingredients, and recipes of Latin America with those of Asia. Glance around at all the beautiful people and gloat, knowing that you're probably spending half of what they are and having just as good a meal. And you'll feel like a BP yourself in this ultra-swank, two-level space, with its chi chi lounge with those perfect-for-canoodling low leather couches; and its cheekily mod brown and orange dining room, its huge windows overlooking the bustling street below. The only odd touch is the huge mobile that hangs above the staircase and looks like, well, flying potatoes (wait until you see it). Ah well, no place is perfect, but this one comes close.

Sunderam, the fare here is worlds away from what you'll find at your local curry joint, and will appeal even to those who normally avoid Indian food, fearing mouth-blasting seasoning. Rasika—the name means "flavor" in Sanskrit—goes gentle on the spices, letting the flavors of the food shine through instead. That was the case with "Fish Mango," an entree of broiled sea bass lightly flavored with curry leaves, onions, and mango ($18). And though the crab masala ($12) is a bit more peppery, its balance of fire and sweet crab meat is so delightful, most diners won't mind (and chili aficionados will cheer). Also attracting raves are the perfectly grilled tandoori selections; and the wide selection of vegetable entrees (making it a top choice for vegetarians). Did I mention that the service is delightful as well? Warm, friendly, and patient. Rasika is located next to Woolly Mammoth (p. 244) so many go for its pre-theater menu: three courses for $28 (a great buy).

DUPONT CIRCLE

One of Washington's most popular nightlife areas, Dupont Circle buzzes with trendy cafes, boites, and bistros of all stripes. Attracting a crowd primarily in its 30s through 50s, including many gay men and women (as much of Washington's gay nightlife is centered in this area), the scene has a European flair, especially in the warmer months, as crowds stroll from one outdoor cafe to another. Along with the restaurants included below, you'll enjoy tasty, affordable meals at **Thai Chef** (1712 Connecticut Ave. NW; ☎ 202/234-5698; http://chatpibal.com/thaichef/main.html; Metro: Dupont Circle; AE, MC, V), which mixes Thai and Japanese food in a chic, minimalist setting; **Bistro du Coin** (1738 Connecticut Ave NW; ☎ 202/234-6969; www.bistroducoin.com; Metro: Dupont Circle; AE, MC, V), French comfort food in a purposefully aged setting meant to look as if it came right out of the movie *Amelie;* or **Teaism** (2009 R St. NW; ☎ 202/667-3827; www.teaism.com; Metro: Dupont Circle; AE, MC, V), an alternative to Starbucks with a dozen fresh brewed teas, but also Asian- and Indian-accented sandwiches, salads, and breakfast fare.

$ Every budget-conscious guide needs at least one no-fuss quick and cheap eatery where a tasty, filling meal is the cook's priority. My choice, with two Washington locations, is the Persian-influenced **Moby Dick House of Kabob** (1300 Connecticut Ave. NW at N Street; ☎ 202/833-9788; www.mobysonline.com; Metro: Farragut North; and in Georgetown, 1070 31st St. NW at M Street; ☎ 202/333-4400; Metrobus [30], [32], [34], [35], [36]; MC, V). A carry-out, Moby invariably is on every best cheap eats list in the city. The Georgetown location is a cramped hole-in-the-wall with tight seating. The Downtown outlet is larger and has more appealing tables, including outdoor seating. Your kabobs come served on a paper plate, but they are well marinated and cooked carefully on an open grill. The pita bread is made in Moby's traditional clay oven. Kabob plates of lamb, ground sirloin, chicken, fish, and beef tenderloin are priced at $7.60 to $14 for the "super combo" (big enough for several dinners). All come with rice and a chopped cucumber and tomato salad.

$–$$ If all you want is a pizza—but not just any pizza, Washington's best pizza—head to **Pizzeria Paradiso** ★ (2029 P St. NW at 20th Street; ☎ 202/223-1245; www.eatyourpizza.com; Metro: Dupont Circle; and also in Georgetown, 3282 M St. NW at 32nd Street; ☎ 202/337-1245; Metrobus [30], [32], [34], [35], [36]; AE, MC, V). The menu lists a variety of offbeat, wood-oven choices, priced from $9.95 to $11 for a nine-inch pizza and $15 to $17 for a 12-incher (two people can share the smaller one, up to four for the larger version). Two dozen toppings are $1.25 to $2.25 each. Be daring, go for everything, which means the Siciliana: tomatoes, zucchini, eggplant, pepper, red onion, capers, garlic, oregano, and mozzarella and pecorino cheeses ($11/$17), topped off with sausage and pepperoni (extra). The Dupont Circle branch, occupying a row house, is tiny, so you may have to wait awhile outside for a table. Considerably more spacious, the newer Georgetown branch looks out onto the pulsating M Street scene. Just how good is the 'za? The *Washingtonian* magazine claimed that it was "world class . . . better than any in Naples." Try it yourself and see if you agree.

In Dupont Circle, Pauline Frommer Recommends . . .

$$ Sette Osteria ✯ (1666 Connecticut Ave. NW at R Street; ☎ 202/483-3070; www.setteosteria.com; Metro: Dupont Circle; AE, DISC, MC, V) because eating here always feels like a party. The food—large plates of al dente pasta and wood-fired pizzas, primarily ($10–$14)—just begs to be shared. The waitstaff is handsome enough to keep heads swiveling. And the cavernous space, bordered on two sides by floor-to-ceiling windows, somehow comes off as warm and inviting, possibly because of the pretty terra cotta floor, dark wood tables, and the twinkling votive candles that light each up. Food-wise, it's fairly straightforward Italian, but well done, by which I mean that the tomato sauces have a robust depth of fruit and spice, the pizzas are crisp throughout, and the salads are fresh and almost as well-dressed as the crowd here. Late night eats are available on Fridays and Saturdays when Sette stays open until 1am.

$$$–$$$$ A small place, seating just 42, **Mark & Orlando's** ✯✯✯ (Dupont Circle, 2020 P St. NW at 20th Street; ☎ 202/223-8463; www.markandorlandos.com; Metro: Dupont Circle; reservations recommended; AE, MC, V) is tucked into an old Washington row house, which gives it an aura of bygone days. (It's one of the reasons I chose it actually, as it allows visitors the rare opportunity to step inside one of these classy homes.) The above-street-level dining room occupies what must have been the former parlor, and an elegant one at that. Tall windows on two sides look down on the busy Circle scene, but you remain above the crowd in a romantic setting of candlelight and quiet. Despite the old timey ambiance, the American menu is definitely contemporary. An example: take what it does with crab cakes, a regional favorite from the nearby Chesapeake Bay. Mark & Orlando's presents the gourmet version. It pan sears the cakes, serving them not with fries (traditional) but with a ragout of cippolini onions, English peas, and gnocchi with tarragon jus ($24). It neatly hits the mark. Another goosed up classic is the savory pork chop, which comes stuffed with pancetta, apple, and blue cheese and is served with pearl onions ($21). Entrees change daily and tend to be priced between $19 and $27. Not so hungry (or short on cash?), the same kitchen creates a tasty choice of filling appetizers ($6–$12) served one flight up at **Mark's,** the restaurant's casual dining spot.

ADAMS MORGAN

This is the prime neighborhood for ethnic dining at inexpensive to moderate prices. But, as a hub of sometimes raucous nightlife, it can be borderline tough. Therefore, it's not a place to take the youngsters unless you are dining early.

$–$$ In this neighborhood crawling with dance clubs and bars, an all-day, all-night restaurant satisfies the urge for a 4am, end-of-night meal. It's called the **The Diner** ✯ (2453 18th St. NW at Columbia Road; ☎ 202/232-8800; www.

dinerdc.com; Metro: Woodley Park-Zoo/Adams Morgan and 10-minute walk; MC, V), and it occupies an old auto parts store, the long, slender room sporting a '50s diner look. On the right is the required counter; tiny, chipped white tiles cover the floor; and one wall is lined with wood booths. Bright lights beaming on the tiles give the place a sort of cheery sparkle; big windows open onto the bustle of 18th Street, adding to a sort of festive buzz. Best of all, the prices for its lengthy menu of classic "homey" American dishes seem, if not in the '50s, at least a step back a decade or so. Dinner entrees range from $8 to $14. Pretend it's Thanksgiving, and go for the roast turkey platter with mashed potatoes and green beans ($8.55) or the roasted rosemary chicken with the same two sides ($9.55). Back in Nebraska, my family dined often on mac and cheese, but it was never as good as The Diner's. Sorry Mom. The fries, by the way, get rave reviews. At dinner, the Diner draws big crowds, so be prepared for a wait if you come then.

$–$$$ The white-tiled walls, striped in red and green, provide minimal decoration, and tables are squeezed between the soft drink refrigerators. Piped *mariachi* tunes serenade, and you can see the cooks at work in the open kitchen. **Mixtec** ★ (1792 Columbia Rd. NW at 18th Street; ☎ 202/332-1011; Metro: Woodley Park-Zoo/Adams Morgan and 10-minute walk; MC, V) is the sort of place you are likely to find on a street corner in Mexico City. But, this tiny eatery with a reputation for quality, inexpensive Mexican dishes, is located on a Washington street corner in the heart of the Latino community. It has become a favorite with diners seeking authentic regional dishes but it can also satisfy the urge for good Tex-Mex food if that's what you are looking for. On a recent return visit, I was tempted by the *pescado* Acapulco ($15), shrimp sautéed in a sauce of fresh garlic, lime, and white wine. It is served with rice, beans, and a small salad. A house specialty, the rice and beans plate served with a beef and pork taco, is basic but tasty ($10). The Mexican sub sandwiches called *tortas* ($7.50)—grilled pork and guacamole with salsa—make a filling and satisfying dinner.

$–$$$ Don't be put off by the drab exterior of **Joyti Indian Cuisine** ★ (2433 18th St. NW at Columbia Road; ☎ 202/518-5892; Metro: Woodley Park-Zoo/Adams Morgan and 10-minute walk; MC, V). Inside, the look is quite spiffy, all tidy and trim and inviting. As Adams Morgan residents have discovered the food is also appealing and inexpensive as well—not as inventive as Rasika (see above), but solid, tasty stuff. That's how I first learned about the restaurant and came to share in their evaluation. The extensive menu ($9.95–$18) reflects the many cuisines of India. From the south, lamb *nilgri korma* ($14), pieces of lamb cooked with cilantro, is a specialty. From the north, try lamb *saag* ($14), a lamb cooked in gently spiced spinach. Both are excellent. Goan fish curry ($13) always brings back memories of the week I spent on the beach in Goa as a young around-the-world backpacker.

$$–$$$ For as long as I can remember, the modestly exotic place for young men to take young women on a first date was **Mama Ayesha's Restaurant** ★ (1967 Calvert St. at Duke Ellington Memorial Bridge; ☎ 202/232-5431; www.mamaayeshas.com; Metro: Woodley Park-Zoo/Adams Morgan; AE, MC, V). Looking a tad worn these days, it still sets a romantic mood with Middle Eastern tunes, a splashing fountain, and colorful wall hangings. The food, Syrian-based

Middle Eastern dishes, doesn't seem quite as exotic as it did before Washington became such an ethnic culinary hot spot. But the waiters remain discreetly attentive, and the entrees ($11–$17) are still tempting and budget friendly. From the charcoal grill, go for the *kifta kabab* ($12), which is ground beef with parsley, onions, and mild spices served over rice, or my wife's favorite, the *shish kabab* ($14), marinated lamb with tomatoes and onions.

U STREET CORRIDOR

The city's edgy developing nightspot area is the hot spot for new, well-priced restaurants (and one old-timer) that feature a variety of cuisines, including soul food and Ethiopian fare. It tends to draw the 20- and 30-something crowd. Again, the nightlife can get rowdy, so don't bring the kids unless you dine early.

$–$$ Ben's Chili Bowl ★ (1213 U St. NW at 13th Street; ☎ 202/667-0909; www.benschilibowl.com; Metro: U Street-African-American Civil War Memorial/Cardozo; MC, V) has been Washington's legendary greasy spoon, since 1958, a seedy-looking, cramped lunch-counter kind of place that serves nothing (well, almost nothing) good for you. Everybody goes there—especially local politicians who want to look like everyday folks—and so should you, though maybe not for dinner—the place is best for lunch, a midnight pick-me-up, or even breakfast. A chili dog smothered in onions and Ben's spicy homemade chili sauce is $3.25; a chili half smoked sausage on a bun, $4.55. Vegetarian chili and veggie and turkey burgers are for health addicts. Whatever you choose, you will be hard-pressed to spend much more than $10. At that price, you get history, too. During the 1968 riots that hit the neighborhood after the assassination of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, the cafe got permission to stay open after curfew to serve fire fighters, public workers, and activists trying to quell the turmoil. In 1985, Bill Cosby staged a press conference at Ben's to celebrate his number 1-rated show. In the early days, when U Street was known as the Black Broadway, the "Bowl's" counter served Duke Ellington, Ella Fitzgerald, Nat King Cole, Miles Davis, and Dr. King himself. It still draws top city officials and touring celebrities. If you go for breakfast (6–11am), a basic platter—two eggs, bacon, biscuit, grits or fried potatoes—is $6.

$–$$$ Ethiopian dining is something of an adventure that, I must add, isn't for everyone, including my wife. She doesn't like the cold, rubbery pancakes called *injera* that you use in place of spoon or fork (none are provided) as a scoop to pick up your food—all sorts of meat and vegetable stews (great for vegetarians). Still, the city supports more Ethiopian restaurants than anywhere else in the United States. The Metropolitan Area is home to one of the largest Ethiopian communities in the country, and critics claim the home country food here is the best you will find anywhere. Previously, "Little Ethiopia" was centered on 18th Street in Adams Morgan. But it has branched out to the U Street neighborhood and shed itself of some of its ethnic trappings. The newest and most upscale is **Etete** ★★ (U Street Corridor, 1942 9th St. NW at U Street; ☎ 202/232-7600; www.etete restaurant.com; Metro: U Street-African-American Civil War Memorial/Cardozo; MC, V). Quite small and seating only about 30, it looks like a hip American cafe. But you still dine the traditional way, scooping up bites of dinner with torn pieces of the thin pancake. (Actually, it's a bit thinner than you'll find at other Ethiopian

On the U Street Corridor, Pauline Frommer Recommends . . .

$–$$$ Dukem Restaurant ✯✯✯ (114–118 U St. at 12th Street NW; ☎ 202/667-8735; www.dukemrestaurant.com; Metro: U Street-African American Civil War Memorial/Cardozo; AE, MC, V). Unlike Jim's wife (see above), I love, love, love Ethiopian food and always make sure to eat it when I come to Washington, D.C. It's become a defining local cuisine, much as BBQ is in Memphis or salmon dishes are in Seattle, and for those who've never tried it, the ritual of eating with your hands, your utensil a scoop of spongy bread, is a true culinary adventure. I used to be a devotee of **Meskerem** in the Adams Morgan neighborhood (and it still is quite good and has the bonus of featuring an evocative African decor of low, carved brass tables), but on recent visits I've transferred my loyalties to Dukem, which, though plainer in looks—it has the look of a sports bar, with TVs scattered about and efficient wood tables—offers a richer eating experience. (I think.) The best way to dine here is to go with a large group so that you can share a combination platter, which will give you a taste of many dishes. If you must choose just one or two, go with a *tibs* plate ($9.95) if you're nervous about trying Ethiopian food. Juicy nubs of beef rubbed with rosemary and garlic and served with some chopped onions and jalapenos, it's a great steak dish, not too challenging, and should be enjoyable even to newbies. Those who are a bit more adventurous will enjoy the *lamb wat* ($11), a stew with a spicy harissa sauce; or the *kifto* ($10), steak tartar but kicked up a notch with the addition of cardamom, an Ethiopian cheese, and a blend of tongue-searing spices. Also highly recommended is the vegetarian combination ($9.50), which will include a comforting yellow lentil stew, hotter dark lentils, and the most flavorful collard greens I've had anywhere. Delicately sweet instead of bitter, not mushy, aromatic—if there ever was a good reason to eat your greens, this dish is it. One last thing: those who go on Monday or Wednesday nights are treated to a live Ethiopian music and dance show as they dine. To offset the costs of the show, the restaurant adds $1 on to the cost of all entrees—and if that doesn't make it the cheapest dinner show in the nation, I don't know what does. The show starts at 6:30pm on Mondays and Wednesdays; drop by other nights after 10pm for African bands sans dinner.

restaurants, which might be good for those who find the texture off-putting.) The word Etete means "Mama" in Amharic, a reference to owner Tiwaltenigus Shenegeleg, a longtime caterer. You are likely to meet her when she strolls the dining room welcoming guests. She calls her menu "Ethiopian soul food," and it consists of filling entrees, ranging from $10 to $14 in price. I suggest the house specialty, *yefem tibs* ($14), a charcoal broiled sliced beef with a trace of garlic and

black pepper. It is served on a metal platter with two condiments alongside. If you want something spicier, opt for the *yebeg alicha,* strips of lamb flavored with jalapeno chilis. Among the vegetarian dishes, a specialty here, the *gomer* is tempting. It's a blend of fresh greens, carrots, potatoes, green peppers, tomatoes, and onions sautéed with garlic and ginger. The restaurant is just steps from Nightclub 9:30, one of the city's premier live music clubs with the African-American Civil War Memorial just around the corner to the left. The restaurant is located on a scruffy but busy street in an edgy neighborhood, so be alert after dark.

$$–$$$ It's a hole in the wall, definitely, with only a few stools for counter seating. But it's got a reputation for serving some of the best (some say *the* best) home-cooked Southern soul food in the city. The name is quite apt, **Oohhs and Aahhs** ★★ (1005 U St. NW at 10th Street; ☎ 202/667-7142; Metro: U Street-African-American Civil War Memorial/Cardozo; MC, V). The entrees ($12–$19) are all-American: fried chicken ($12), my favorite—Popeye's doesn't come close; fried catfish ($14); and yams, cabbage, collard greens, and corn bread. Go for the food, not the decor, and to meet the neighborhood residents who are convinced—as a gentleman advised me at the door recently—that the place serves up "the best goddamned food in town." He's got a point.

$$$ My neighbor, an about town lady who has a nose for hidden gems, first directed me to **Al Crostino** ★★ (1324 U St. NW at 13th Street; ☎ 202/797-0523; www.alcrostino.com; Metro: U Street-African-American Civil War Memorial/Cardozo; reservations recommended; MC, V), a cozy Italian *trattoria.* She loves the food and the amiable service (as do I). One of a crop of new chi chi restaurants debuting on the street, it has managed to keep its prices in the moderate range; entrees are $14 to $18. Looking for something light? Go for the pasta and a salad—let's say, ricotta dumplings with a fresh tomato sauce ($14), preceded by an arugula and fennel salad with walnuts ($8.50). Heartier appetites (mine, for example) relish the Tuscan-style rib-eye steak, grilled and sliced and topped with arugula and ground pepper ($17). The restaurant's name comes, of course, from *crostini,* the little hard crusts spread with condiments of all kinds, and a sampling plate as an appetizer is $7.

$$–$$$$ Mediterranean cuisine, very popular in Washington, comes by way of Turkey at the sleek **Tabaq Bistro** ★ (1336 U St. NW at 13th Street; ☎ 202/265-0965; www.tabaqdc.com; Metro: U Street-African-American Civil War Memorial/Cardozo; reservations recommended; AE, MC, V), which occupies a beautifully renovated late 19th-century brownstone row house. You climb a short set of stairs to enter a long, sleek-looking room sporting a red, black, and silver decor. Don't be frightened by the sound system in the front of the room if you're looking for a quiet, romantic meal. The DJ doesn't show up until 10pm and only on Friday and Saturday. You choose between *mezze* (small plates, $4.25–$14) or the well-priced entrees ($13–$21). The *adana* kebab entree, grilled lamb and beef on a skewer, is seasoned with mild spices and served with yogurt sauce ($15). Similarly tempting is Tabaq chicken, a grilled chicken breast flavored with roasted red bell peppers and topped with a tomato basil sauce ($15). The upper floor bar sports a retractable glass roof, great for sipping an after-dinner drink under the stars on a summer evening.

LOGAN CIRCLE/14TH STREET

The locale of a condominium apartment boom, the neighborhood has recently sprouted a number of stylish but reasonably priced restaurants to serve the new urbanites. Expect happening restaurants, newly relocated galleries, and cute boutiques for a hipster crowd who like their choices well edited.

$$–$$$ Until you see the menu, the spare, contemporary look of the restaurant gives no hint that Thai is the cuisine featured at **Rice** ★★ (1608 14th St. NW at Q Street; ☎ 202/234-2400; www.ricerestaurant.com; Metro: McPherson Square; reservations not accepted; AE, MC, V). Another of the chic new ethnic cafes in Washington abandoning the Old World look, it tempts with what has been dubbed a "refined" Thai menu—a contemporary updating of traditional dishes—at prices somewhat higher than the familiar mom-and-pop Thai houses. Entrees range from $13 to $17, which is still reasonable given the classy setting and short, but intriguing menu. My favorite dish, which I highly recommend, is sautéed pork in green tea, sake, and soy sauce ($14). But the red curry shrimp with eggplant and basil ($14), which has a bit more of a spicy bite to it, comes in at a close second. Although the special "ginger" menu reads well, the ginger can be overpowering. And ask for a table if you're on the short side—at the banquette, my wife's feet don't touch the floor.

$$–$$$ Superfresh seasonal ingredients, simple cooking techniques, and more than a smidgeon of pizzazz are the hallmarks of the contemporary American menu at **Viridian** ★★ (1515 14th St. at P Street; ☎ 202/234-1400; www.viridianrestaurant.com; Metro: McPherson Square; reservations recommended; AE, MC, V). A new entry in the emerging neighborhood, it has quickly become a hot spot. The thick organic pork T-bone is served with smoked bacon vinaigrette ($18). Wild mahi-mahi arrives in a bed of grapefruit and fennel ($20). The menu changes often, so you may not see these exact dishes—but something similar. Entrees range from $13 to $26. A three-course, pre-theater menu is offered from 5:30 to 7pm for $32 per person.

GEORGETOWN (AND GLOVER PARK, RIGHT NEXT DOOR)

Along with the restaurants recommended below are two budget greats that I feature in the Dupont Circle section, but also have branches here: Moby's (p. 70) and Pizzeria Paradiso (p. 70). Like many restaurants in this neighborhood they cater to Georgetown's large (and hungry and broke) student population. But Georgetown goes beyond pizza parlors and burger joints; a number of extremely well-heeled Washingtonians call this neighborhood home. For them, elegant and expensive eateries conspire to make Georgetown a gourmand's treat.

$–$$$$ You can smell the spices as you step in the door, and the unfamiliar background music adds its own exotic note at Turkish **Café Divan** ★ kids (Upper Georgetown, 1834 Wisconsin Ave. NW at 34th Street; ☎ 202/338-1747; www.cafedivan.com; Metrobus [30], [32], [34], [35], [36]; AE, MC, V). The room

is small, but exceedingly handsome in a spare modernistic style with polished wood tabletops. Large showroom windows wrap the restaurant on three sides so that it almost seems like you're dining outdoors. Entrees on the lengthy menu range from $15 to $19; sandwiches are $5.50 to $7.50; pizzas range from $5.95 to $7.95. My advice is to go for the traditional Turkish dishes, such as the chicken *begendili* ($15), which is sliced breast of chicken served with pureed eggplant and rice pilaf. The *doner kebab* ($9.95), thin slices of roast lamb and veal cooked on a spit, is a neighborhood favorite. As I learned from him, the kebab combines lamb and veal that are marinated in olive oil, onions, and cumin and pressed on a spit. It is sliced thinly and served atop bread, yoghurt, and tomatoes as a one dish meal. I've had this more than once when I visited Turkey because I think it's so good, and the version here is quite authentic.

$$–$$$$ If Turkish is not your thing, consider taking a note from Vienna and dine on *wiener schnitzel* at **Leopold's Kafe & Konditorei** ★★★ (Georgetown, 3315 Cady's Alley NW behind 3318 M Street at 33rd; ☎ 202/965-6005; www.kafeleopolds.com; Metrobus [30], [32], [34], [35], [36]; AE, MC, V). In decor, Leopold's is vanguard Europe—white tables, sleek lines, the waitstaff dressed in black. In food, it's Austrian traditional with modern touches. That is, the food tends to be lighter, without so many of the heavy sauces you get in Vienna's old restaurants. My favorite dish in Vienna, and thus at Leopold's, is the veal *schnitzel* ($22), a tasty entree that is probably the most famous, most traditional dish served in Austria. A large but thinly sliced veal scallop, it is dipped in flour, beaten eggs, and breadcrumbs and then sautéed. A slice of lemon and capers are the traditional garnish. The display case desserts are lovely to look at but pricey; the baked chocolate mousse with hazelnut ice cream is a hefty $9. Ah well, dieting is something you do at home not on vacation. In fair weather, courtyard tables are the place to sit. They look onto Cady's Alley, a narrow lane lined by classy home furnishing shops.

$$–$$$$ Let's pop into another all-American saloon, which is so popular locally it has spawned a string of Washington-area clones and, indeed, acquired the Old Ebbitt Grill (see above) along the way. Something of a modern legend because of its astonishing success in a city that sees countless good restaurants fail, **Clyde's of Georgetown** ★★ Kids (Georgetown, 3236 M St. NW at Wisconsin Avenue; ☎ 202/333-9180; www.clydes.com; Metrobus [30], [32], [34], [35], [36]; AE, MC, V), which opened in 1963, keeps the locals coming by serving up both standard saloon fare as well as innovative American fare in preppy/collegiate surroundings that are comfortable and somehow reassuring. As at the Old Ebbitt, you will see lots of dark wood, polished brass, and seemingly acres of sporting prints all but hiding the walls. Dinner entrees range from $16–$24. But you're welcome to order an entree salad ($13–$15) or a Clyde's big burger ($7.95), regarded by many as the best in the entire Metropolitan area. My advice, though, is to skip the saloon menu and go for the more intriguing dishes. Try the mustard crusted Atlantic salmon ($17), which comes with a fennel-tomato gratin and buttery cabbage. Or: the grilled porterhouse pork chop with maple glaze ($16), adorned with apples, raisins, and wild rice.

In Cleveland Park and the Palisades, Pauline Frommer Recommends . . .

$–$$$ Yanni's Taverna ★★ kids (3500 Connecticut Ave. NW; ☎ 202/362-8871; www.yannisgreektaverna.com; Metro: Cleveland Park; AE, DISC, MC, V). Perfect for an after-zoo meal (it's a quick stroll from the gate), Yanni's is the type of cheery neighborhood place where the waiters will joke with your kids and the effusive owner hugs longtime customers as they enter. But even if you're new to it, you're sure to be impressed not only by the friendly service but by the seriously tasty food here. Serving Greek food at its very richest (the yogurt dip, tzatziki, is as dense and creamy as crème brulee), it hits all the usual standards—souvlaki, mousakka, greek salad—but does them all with a precision and yes, artistry, that usually spells higher prices. Special mentions must go to the addictive *skordalia* ($4.95), a cloud light whip of potatoes and garlic; the moist chicken *souvlaki* ($7.95–$11, depending on sides); and the *pastistio* ($9.95), a rich "lasagna" of meat and pasta with a smooth béchamel sauce. But what I dream about when I'm away from Washington is Yanni's *gyro* ($7.95–$11) which has a smoky toast to it, and a spot-on blend of spices that keeps me munching, even after I'm full.

$–$$ Kotobuki Japanese Restaurant ★★ (4822 MacArthur Blvd. NW, 2nd floor; ☎ 202/281-6679; www.kotobukiusa.com; take the metro to Foggy Bottom and a bus from there to Palisades; MC, V on orders of $10 or more). What would you say if I told you Washington, D.C. was home to a sushi restaurant where you could gorge without guilt? Where the pieces of maki sushi were selling for only $1 a piece . . . and they didn't cause stomach poisoning? That's the case at this modest, second-story eatery and though it's difficult to get to, the sushi is so good, and so darn *cheap*, that I think it's worth the trek. By using one seafood purveyor only (for many years), by making their own pickled ginger and (often) soy sauce, by playing only one tape of Beatles music over and over (and over) chef/owner Hasao Abe has managed to keep costs down. So what he spends goes into the fish, and he's not only able to serve silken, tendon-free, perfectly cut sushi, but he often offers more unusual varieties such as white tuna, steamed monkfish liver paté, and square-pressed mackerel sushi for next to nothing. (Rolls are $2.80–$3.25, and almost every piece of sushi and sashimi, as I said before, is $1.) Seriously, you won't believe how good it is at the price. (Take the bus, so the cost of a taxi doesn't eat up any savings you make on the food.)

$$–$$$$ When John F. Kennedy was courting Jackie he took her to **Martin's Tavern** ★★ (Georgetown, 1264 Wisconsin Ave. NW at N Street; ☎ 202/333-7370; www.martins-tavern.com; Metrobus [30], [32], [34], [35], [36], or the K Street Circulator bus; reservations recommended; AE, MC, V). And today it remains *the* Georgetown spot for a first-rate, really traditional American meal. Martin's debuted in 1933 the day after Prohibition ended, and today it is run by the fourth generation of Martins. They haven't changed it much. The sort of dumpy exterior, occupying a prominent corner, looks out of place among Georgetown's chic boutiques. But inside hard-wood booths and the 18-seat mahogany bar give the joint an old-fashioned warmth. It's usually full, and half the customers are regulars. Much of the staff has been around for years; they serve with efficiency and a one-of-the-family manner. The menu (full plates, $13–$26) offers no surprises: 12-oz. cut of prime rib ($25), Delmonico steak ($23), pot roast ($18), chicken Parmesan ($15)—two side dishes included. Comfy food, well prepared—and, who knows, another President-to-be may be sitting at the next table?

$$–$$$S Old Europe ★ (Glover Park, 2434 Wisconsin Ave. NW at Calvert Street; ☎ 202/333-7600; www.old-europe.com; Metrobus [30], [32], [34], [35], [36]; reservations recommended; closed Monday; AE, MC, V) is schmaltzy, but that's part of its charm, and after all it's been a Washington fixture for more than 6 decades. For old-style German dishes, this is the place to go. The setting is a traditional-looking German *rathskeller;* the menu is just as traditional. In Germany and at Old Europe, sauerbraten ($18)—sweet and sour marinated slices of braised beef served with potato dumplings—is one of my favorite dishes. It is prepared beautifully here. My wife, who favors Eastern European dishes, goes for the *bratwurst mit sauerkraut* ($18)—pan-fried pork sausage served with sauerkraut and potato dumplings. Other entrees range from $13 to $23. When representatives of the German tourist information office were in town recently, they held their press luncheon at Old Europe—an endorsement with clout. For dessert, Black Forest cake ($5.75) or apple strudel ($5.75) is de rigeur.

TENLEYTOWN

Tenleytown serves the large American University community with a mix of ethnic cafes, pizza parlors, and beer pubs.

$ When my wife and I want good traditional Mexican food, which is often, we head to **Guapo's** kids (Tenleytown, 4515 Wisconsin Ave. NW; ☎ 202/686-3588; www.guaposrestaurant.com; Metro: Tenleytown-American University; AE, MC, V). Prompt and friendly service, wicked margaritas, and a festive South of the Border setting have proved so popular locally—and this includes the Latino community—that the owners have opened six more in the suburbs. We were among the first diners at this one, the original, and it's become our fallback place when neither of us is in the mood to cook. The burrito, enchilada, and chimichanga

Soul Food Buffet

$ For home-cooked soul food in a historically African-American neighborhood, don't miss the **Saint's Paradise Cafeteria** ★★ (Shaw, 601-A M St. NW between 6th and 7th sts.; ☎ **202/789-2289**; Metro: Mount Vernon Square-7th Street/Convention Center; Mon–Fri 7am–7pm, Sat–Sun 8am–6pm; cash only). Go for lunch or dinner to this find. It dishes up crispy fried chicken, beef short ribs, pigs' feet, chitterlings, corn bread, and much more every day of the week—and every heaping plate costs less than $10. A Shaw neighborhood haven for budget diners for more than 4 decades, the cafeteria is operated by the United House of Prayer for All People, a huge, sprawling church with a massive gold dome. Drawing as many as 500 diners a day—breakfast, lunch, and dinner—it's a favorite with the staff of nearby Howard University Hospital, neighborhood school teachers, Washington police and firemen, judges and lawyers from the nearby court houses, and conventioneers attending the Washington Convention Center a half block away. This is a chance to see another Washington, well away from the Mall and entertainment centers.

platters—heaped with refried beans, rice, guacamole and *pico de gallo* relish—range from $8.95 to $13, although most are under $10. Free chips and salsa hit the table as soon as you sit down, the scent of smoking *fajitas* ($11–$16 for a platter) whets your appetite and Mariachi tunes on the sound system set feet to tapping.

5 Remarkable Sights & Attractions

The ones you definitely should see

A VISIT TO WASHINGTON IS A STEP INTO THE PAGES OF AMERICAN HISTORY, a saga that is being added to daily. During your stay, it's not improbable that the White House, the Capitol, or the Supreme Court will take some action that has important national or even international impact. If you take in a session of the Court, the Senate, or the House of Representatives, you might even see it happen in person.

As the nation's capital, Washington also has become the place to honor national heroes, past presidents, victorious generals, and other notable leaders—even a few foreign leaders—whose lives have had a great and beneficial impact on the rest of us. Here George Washington, who gave his name to the city, receives his thanks in a soaring monument that is recognized around the world. The Lincoln Memorial, honoring the "Great Emancipator," has served as a stage for great moments in the history of the civil rights movement. The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., gave his memorable "I Have a Dream" speech from its steps. Imposing statues and gleaming marble memorials recall the many sacrifices of the veterans of the nation's wars. I take you to these places of pilgrimage.

This is a city that is rapidly taking its place as a cultural capital. Yes, New York City holds that title, but Washington may be catching up. It is home to the Smithsonian Institution, certainly the world's most remarkable collection of museums. The "Nation's Attic," as it is sometimes called, preserves and displays a vast number of historical and cultural objects. I'll guide you to the best of the Smithsonian's many museums—and to several more that also qualify as world class.

In this chapter, I show you how to get the most out of your visit. I'll suggest some escorted tours (for those who want them) and highlight educational programs for youngsters, historic houses, and significant architectural treasures. As importantly, I'll tell you how to get inside major government facilities, including the White House, despite intense security precautions imposed following the 9/11 tragedy that struck New York City and Washington.

GETTING ORGANIZED

At some point on your visit, you have to face up to the fact that you can't see everything. I've been a professional travel writer in the city for a quarter century, and until I began researching this guide my to-do list still remained uncompleted. Rest easy, I've sorted things out for you. First, I give you three recommended

itineraries, if you can stay only 1, 2, or 3 days. And then, I introduce you one-by-one to the city's must-visit sites, whether they be federal buildings, monuments, memorials, museums, or historic houses.

Whew, you've got a lot of territory to cover. Thankfully, all but a handful of attractions are located in Washington's central core and can be easily reached by Metrorail or on foot.

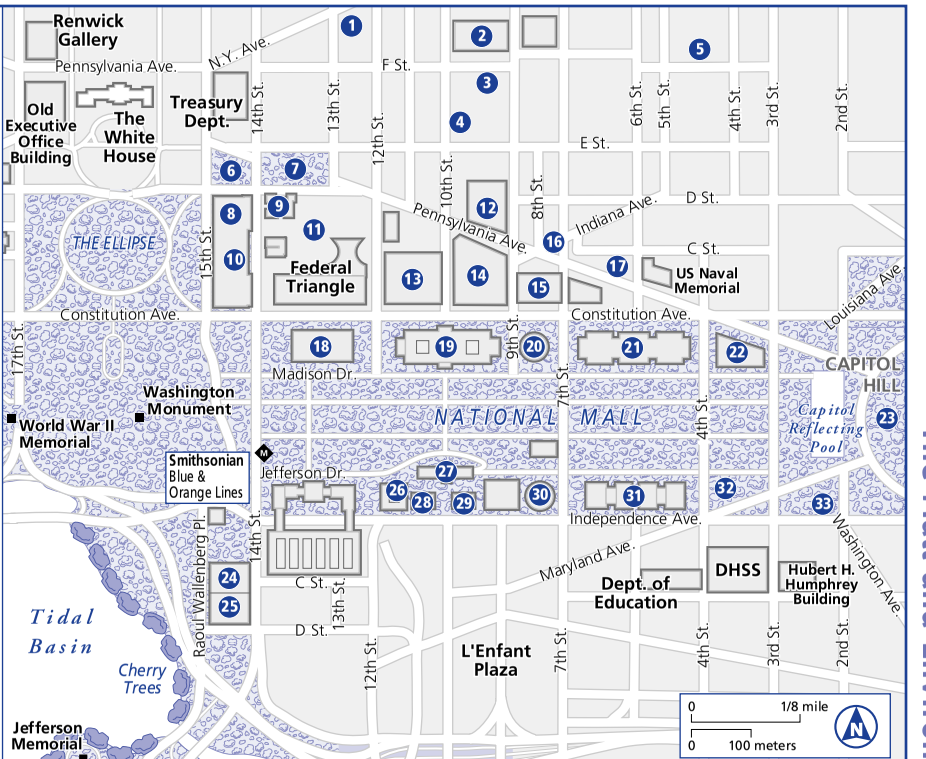
MAKE THE BEST USE OF LIMITED TIME, WITH 1-, 2-, AND 3-DAY ITINERARIES TO THE ESSENTIAL WASHINGTON

These itineraries assume your quick trip was made more or less on the spur of the moment and you didn't have time to contact your U.S. representative or one of your U.S. senators for passes to the White House, the Capitol, and the Pentagon.

If you have just 1 day in Washington: You've got plenty of company. Business travelers from all over the country and the world are dispatched to the city to pitch their cause or product to the federal government. The lucky ones manage to eke out a day, at most, to look around before they hurry home. If your sightseeing time is this limited, begin your day at the major memorials and monuments on the Mall. National Park rangers go on duty at 8am, which gives you an early start; no lines or security checks slow you down; and you can walk from one to the other. To get started, circle the **White House,** observing it from outside its high iron-bar fence. Note the **Department of Treasury Building** next door. Then walk a block south to the **Mall** and visit in order: the **Washington Monument, World War II Memorial, Vietnam Veteran's Memorial, Vietnam Women's Memorial, Lincoln Memorial, Korean War Veterans Memorial, Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial,** and the **Thomas Jefferson Memorial.** This should fill a morning. Spend the afternoon visiting two museums. I recommend the Smithsonian Institution's **National Air and Space Museum** on the Mall, since it's fascinating, fun, and the best of its kind anywhere. While on the Mall, stop for a couple of minutes to take in the majesty of the **U.S. Capitol** in the distance. Among a choice of major art museums, make it the Smithsonian's **American Art Museum** and **National Portrait Gallery,** 4 blocks north of the Mall in the bustling Penn Quarter neighborhood. Both are great museums, and American art seems most fitting on this all-American race through the Nation's Capital. Catch an evening performance at the **John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts** (or at least the free **Millennium Stage** concert nightly at 6pm in the Grand Foyer).

If you have 2 days: On **Day 1,** duplicate the itinerary above. On **Day 2,** take a guided tour inside the **U.S. Capitol.** Except in winter when ticket demand is light, be at the Visitor Center by 8:30am to get a timed ticket. If you must wait an hour or two for the tour, use the delay profitably by visiting the **Supreme Court of the United States** and the **Library of Congress,** both located behind the Capitol. Foreign visitors are likely to find more of interest at the Library of Congress, which displays literary treasures from around the world. Spend the rest of the day sampling more Mall attractions. The must-dos are the **National Archives,** the **National Gallery of Art,** and the **U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum.** Stroll the **National Sculpture Garden,** outside the National Gallery of Art. Catch an evening performance at **Ford's Theatre National Historic Site.**

American Art/Portrait Gallery **2**
Bureau Engraving/Printing **25**
District Building (City Hall) **9**
DC Visitor Information Center **11**
FBI **12**
Ford's Theatre **4**
Freedom Plaza **7**
Freer Gallery **26**
Hirshhorn Museum **30**
IRS **13**
International Spy Museum **3**
Justice Department **14**
National Air/Space Museum **31**
National Aquarium **10**
National Archives **15**
National Gallery of Art **21**
National Gallery-East Bldg. **22**
National Gallery Sculpture Garden **20**
National Building Museum **5**
National Museum of African Art **29**
National Museum of American History **18**
National Museum of American Indian **32**
National Museum of Natural History **19**
National Museum of Women in Arts **1**
Newseum (fall 07) **17**
Pershing Park **6**
Sackler Gallery **28**
Smithsonian Castle/Information **27**
U.S. Botanic Garden **33**
U.S. Capitol **23**
U.S. Holocaust Memorial **24**
U.S. Navy Memorial **16**
White House Visitor Center **8**



The National Mall, America's "Front Yard"

A 2-mile-long public promenade stretching from the U.S. Capitol at its east end to the Lincoln Memorial and Potomac River on the west, the National Mall ★★★ is a unique place, duplicated nowhere else in the country. Philadelphia's Independence Mall is similar, but its focus is solely on the country's birth. The National Mall links past, present, and future. Two of the three branches of the federal government, the White House (executive) and the Capitol (legislative), both enjoy prominent Mall locations. The third branch, the Supreme Court (judicial), nudges the Mall from behind the Capitol.

Pierre L'Enfant, the architect who laid out the basic plan for Washington in the 1790s, envisioned the Mall as a ceremonial expanse. But for the next century, it suffered more as a national embarrassment, sporting railroad tracks, open sewers, and squalid shacks. Finally in 1902, a Congressional Commission chaired by Sen. James McMillan of Michigan—the McMillan Commission—began to push for change. The railroad moved out, swamps were drained, and grand marble monuments began to sprout. The Mall was on its way to becoming what it is today, a national treasure.

Lining both sides stand 10 of the Smithsonian Institution's museums, the stately National Gallery of Art, and the National Archives. Here, too, are the monuments and memorials recognized worldwide—the Washington Monument, the Lincoln and Jefferson Memorials, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, and many more.

As America's "front yard," a term favored by the National Park Service, the Mall plays many roles. It has been and will continue to be a place of protest, drawing Americans by the tens of thousands to condemn or support a variety of nation-shaking causes. It is a place of ceremony, where

If you have 3 days: On **Day 1** and **Day 2,** follow the itineraries above. On **Day 3,** spend the morning at **Arlington National Cemetery.** Take the Metro across the Potomac River to the cemetery, where all these places are located. If you've still got stamina, return on foot across the **Arlington Memorial Bridge,** a grand ceremonial gateway to the city. Built in 1932 as a symbol of a nation reunited after the Civil War, the short span links Washington, the Union capital, with Virginia, which seceded from the Union. Spend the afternoon browsing the shops of **Georgetown,** most located on M Street NW and Wisconsin Avenue NW. Visit some of the residential streets also, perhaps stopping for a tour at **Tudor Place,** a historic home, or the lovely gardens at **Dumbarton Oaks.** Enjoy an early dinner at a **U Street Corridor** restaurant (**Dukem,** perhaps, for Ethiopian fare) and catch an 8pm performance at nearby **Studio Theatre.** Cap the evening at a **U Street** bar or club, but don't go alone. The intersection of U

citizens gather to watch a Presidential Inauguration every 4 years. An annual summer folk festival, a giant book fair, an annual summer movie festival, and Fourth of July fireworks enliven its festivities calendar.

As a park, it's a place to play. At noon, joggers pour from nearby office buildings to race its paths. Frisbee enthusiasts hone their skills. The annual 26-mile Marine Corps Marathon, which I completed a few years ago, threads the Mall every October. In odd corners, local clubs compete in softball, soccer, rugby, field hockey, and volleyball on well-maintained playing fields and courts. The nonathletic can relax on a Mall bench, sipping a cold beverage and watching the passing throngs.

And the Mall is a place of beauty. Two thousand lofty American elms shade Mall pathways. The Tidal Basin's 3,000 Japanese cherry trees, fluttering with pink blossoms in early spring, glean admiration from around the world. Thousands of flowers—tulips, pansies, and annuals—decorate formal gardens and planting beds. Fountains splash, ornamental pools glisten in the sun, and the Potomac River glides swiftly past. Expect to spend much of your stay in the city on the Mall or not far away.

A cautionary note: At press time (spring 2007), the Mall was hit by a string of late-night robberies aimed at tourists. At the same time, one young woman was the victim of rape, committed near the Smithsonian Metrorail station. City and park police officials beefed up patrols as a result, and arrests were made. But my advice is not to go walking on the Mall at night alone or with just one other person. The major monuments are lighted, and park rangers are on duty at each of them until midnight. But this isn't true of the dark spaces in between.

and 14th Streets NW is a hopping night spot but still a bit rough around the edges.

WASHINGTON'S 8 ICONIC SIGHTS

Of all of Washington's many historic and cultural sights, eight are must-sees:

HELLO, MR. PRESIDENT Every American school child knows the dramatic story of First Lady Dolley Madison in the War of 1812. Threatened by the advancing British army intent on burning Washington, she delayed her harried flight—cannon fire echoing across the city—just long enough to rescue a historic portrait of George Washington. On a tour, you see that same portrait, which hangs fully intact in the elegant ceremonial East Room of the **White House** ★★★ Kids (1600 Pennsylvania Ave. NW, adjacent to the Mall; ☎ 202/208-1631; Metro: Farragut North or McPherson Square; www.nps.gov/whho; limited free tours; Tues–Sat except federal holidays 7:30am–12:30pm). Acquired by President John

Washington's Greatest Treasures

The city's many museums display a cornucopia of fascinating objects, many of incalculable monetary value and all of them of historical import. Here are 12 of the most notable:

- ***Ginevra de' Benci,*** the only painting in the United States by the Florentine master Leonardo da Vinci. *National Gallery of Art.*
- **Moon Rock,** a small, smooth slice of the moon astronauts brought home to earth. *National Air and Space Museum.*
- **Declaration of Independence,** one of the nation's most cherished documents. *National Archives.*
- **Hope Diamond,** the legendary 45.5-caret bluish gem found in India in the 1600s. *National Museum of Natural History.*
- **Gutenberg Bible of 1455,** one of only three still-existing copies printed on hand-made parchment. *Library of Congress.*
- **Star-Spangled Banner,** the War of 1812 flag that inspired America's National Anthem. *National Museum of American History* (closed until 2008).
- ***Luncheon of the Boating Party* by Renoir,** one of the world's most popular paintings. *The Phillips Collection.*
- **Harmony in Blue and Gold: The Peacock Room,** a complete room with floor-to-ceiling paintings by James McNeill Whistler. *Freer Gallery of Art.*
- **George Washington by Gilbert Stuart,** the *Lansdowne* portrait of 1796, generally regarded as the most famous portrait of Washington. *National Portrait Gallery.*
- **First Folio of Shakespeare,** an original copy of the first collected edition of the Bard's work published in 1616. *Folger Shakespeare Library.*
- **Wright Flyer,** the flimsy aircraft launched by Wilber and Orville Wright at Kitty Hawk in 1903 that inaugurated manned flights. *National Air and Space Museum.*
- **Dorothy's Ruby Red Slippers,** a pair of the magical shoes worn by Judy Garland in Hollywood's *The Wizard of Oz.* A permanent exhibit at the National Museum of American History (closed until 2008), they are temporarily on display in the "Treasures of American History" exhibit at the National Air and Space Museum.

Adams, the Washington portrait is the only object known to have remained in the White House since 1800 when John and Abigail Adams became the first First Family to occupy it.

If you can arrange a tour (a big qualification; see below), visiting the White House should be at the top of your must-do list. You never know, you might meet the President. It's not unheard of for the Chief Executive to amble down the hallway past

visitors as they move from room to room examining the fancy furnishings and historic paintings.

The 30-minute White House tour is self-guided; after passing through stringent security, you proceed between roped barriers past a number of rooms used for official events. This isn't an ideal way to see the White House; you grab a quick glance and move on, not really learning much. But since this is all you will get, consider purchasing, "The White House: An Historic Guide," ($7) at the White House Visitor Center (see below). Published by the White House Historical Association, it identifies nearly every historical furnishing in both the rooms on the public tour and those that aren't. The Visitor Center also provides exhibits on White House history and decor.

Notable rooms you'll visit on the tour include:

- The **Library** is furnished in the style of the late Federal period (1800–1820). The gilded wood chandelier with the painted red band was made about 1800 and belonged to the family of author James Fennimore Cooper (**The Last of the Mohicans**). The silver plate lamps on the mantel were a gift of the Marquis de Lafayette.
- The **Diplomatic Reception Room** is where ambassadors arrive to present their diplomatic credentials. Franklin Roosevelt gave his "fireside chats" from this room. Beyond, Roosevelt used the **Map Room** as the "situation room" to chart the progress of World War II.
- The **East Room,** largest in the White House, hosts receptions, ceremonies, and press conferences. And, yes, there's the famous 1797 portrait of George Washington rescued by Dolley Madison. During the Civil War, Union troops occupied the room briefly. Theodore Roosevelt's children reportedly used it as a roller-skating rink. Seven presidents, including Abraham Lincoln and John F. Kennedy, have lain in state in the room at their deaths.
- The walls of the exquisite **Green Room,** a parlor for small teas and receptions, is covered with a green silk fabric chosen by Jacqueline Kennedy. On the wall to the left of the fireplace, is a Gilbert Stuart portrait of Louisa Adams, wife of John Quincy Adams.
- The **Blue Room**—no doubting its bold color—has nearly always been a reception room, furnished in the French Empire style. President James Monroe chose the decor, ordering the seven gilded chairs from a Parisian cabinetmaker. The American public, or at least some of them, thought he should have shopped at home. It was during Monroe's presidency that the burned out White House was restored and furnished. Monroe was criticized for the extravagance of his choices.
- A state reception room, the brilliant **Red Room** is furnished in the American Empire style, chosen in 1962 by the Kennedys. The small round table opposite the fireplace is considered the most important American Empire piece in the White House. It was designed by French émigré and celebrated cabinetmaker Charles-Honore Lannuier. The American Empire music stand to the right of the fireplace recalls the room's use as a music room.

Washington Free, a Penny-Pincher's Paradise

On a really tight budget, you easily could enjoy a week or more in the nation's capital and not spend a penny on sightseeing, recreation, or entertainment. Really.

So how do you spend a frugal week?

All the major federal institutions—the places that make the news—schedule free tours (although you may have to apply in advance for passes). At the top of the list is the **White House,** followed by the **U.S. Capitol,** the **Supreme Court,** the **Library of Congress,** the **U.S. State Department,** and the **Pentagon.** Seeing these national icons should fill 2 or 3 days.

Every one of the **Smithsonian Institution's** museums, including the **National Air and Space Museum,** is free, as is the renowned **National Gallery of Art,** tucked in among the Smithsonian buildings. Visiting them could take much of the rest of the week. But even all this doesn't exhaust the possibilities. Several **embassies,** including the gorgeous Canadian and Finnish embassies, host free art shows regularly.

The **National Archives,** home of the U.S. Constitution, doesn't ask for a cent. Neither do the **U.S. Botanic Garden, U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum,** the **Bureau of Engraving and Printing** (where big bucks are stacked high), **Arlington National Cemetery,** or **Ford's Theatre National Historic Site,** where Lincoln was assassinated. By now, you are probably well into a second all-free week in Washington.

But there's more. The **National Zoo,** home (at least for awhile) to a family threesome of Giant Pandas, is free. To see the zoo properly takes most of a full day.

- The final room on the tour is the **State Dining Room,** which can seat as many as 140 guests. It is often the scene of gala dinners honoring visiting kings, queens, presidents, and prime ministers.

Snagging a tour: Now for the bad news. Since Sept 11, 2001, gaining access to the White House has become more difficult. Currently tours are limited to groups of 10 or more. U.S. residents must request passes from their senator or member of Congress. But you are not out in the cold if you are a single, say, or a couple or a family of four. Most (but not all) legislators will assemble groups of 10 people, who may not know each other. Your senator or representative might even find a spot for you in a group put together by a legislator from another state. If you call one senator and are turned down, then contact your other senator or your representative. Foreign visitors should apply through their embassy in Washington. The White House takes requests up to 6 months in advance. Tours are scheduled about a month in advance of your requested date.

All the most-famous monuments and memorials are free—**Washington Monument, Jefferson Memorial, Lincoln Memorial, World War II Memorial, Vietnam Veterans Memorial.** So are the lesser-known but still compelling ones—the **Iwo Jima Statue,** the **Korean War Veterans Memorial,** the **Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial.**

And at night?

Catch a free performance every night of your stay at the **Kennedy Center's Millennium Stage,** 6 to 7pm in the Grand Foyer. Rock, pops, classical, jazz, blues, bluegrass—the program, featuring up-and-coming talent and some established favorites, changes every show. Take in a bookstore **poetry reading** or **book discussion;** the city enjoys a rich (and free) literary calendar. Attend a **Smithsonian lecture.**

You want tunes? Tap your feet to a lively band concert. In summer, the **Army, Navy,** and **Marine Corps bands** perform alternately at 8pm Monday through Friday on the west steps of the Capitol Building. Or go classical. From early October through June the **National Gallery of Art** is the venue for 6:30pm Sunday chamber concerts and solos in the gallery's West Garden Court. No tickets required; just show up.

A free movie under the stars? Each Monday at sundown from mid-July to mid-August, the **Screen on the Green** movie festival presents a free show of a Hollywood classic on the National Mall (between 4th and 7th streets).

The freebies list is long. Keep your eyes open while you are in town, and you are sure to add to it.

Remember, however, even if you receive a pass, a tour is not assured. Because of unforeseen events—perhaps a last-minute visit of a foreign leader—tours may be cancelled abruptly. Check the phone number listed earlier in this chapter for schedule changes.

So how do you experience the White House if you don't have a visitor's pass? First, stop by the **White House Visitor Center** 2 blocks away at 1450 Pennsylvania Ave. NW. Open from 7:30am to 4pm daily, it serves as a museum of White House history, presenting exhibits, audio-visual displays, and ranger-led talks. And then circle the White House on foot, taking in the impressive—and very photogenic—views of the front and back. If you happen to be there at 11:30am, join one of the themed walks led by National Park Service rangers, which focus on the statuary, monuments, and memorials that adorn the President's Park—the name given to the encircling green spaces outside the White

The White House in Brief

- The oldest public building in Washington, it welcomed John Adams, the second president, as its first resident on Nov 1, 1800, a few months before his term ended. It was still unfinished at the time, and, yes, First Lady Abigail Adams did use the East Room to dry the family laundry.
- Though recognizable for more than 200 years, it has undergone many changes, including the 1902 addition of the West Wing, where the Oval Office is located. The interior structure, greatly weakened over the years, was completely gutted and rebuilt within the original walls from 1948 to 1952, during President Truman's administration.
- President Theodore Roosevelt officially changed the name to the White House. Previously, it was known formally as the Executive Mansion and the President's House. But most people dubbed it the White House almost from the beginning.

House fence. Other interpretive programs at the Visitor Center (9:30am and 1:30pm) include a verbal tour of the President's office in the West Wing and a slide show featuring American artists whose works are in the White House collection.

SYMBOL OF DEMOCRACY They squabble, they bluster, sometimes they orate in profound and elegant phrases, and often they bore us silly. They procrastinate, they maneuver, and yet they get things done—for better or for worse, depending on your point of view. These are America's national legislators, its senators and representatives gathered together in one of the world's most recognizable structures. Around the globe, the **United States Capitol** ★★★ Kids (Atop Capitol Hill at the east end of the Mall; ☎ 202/225-6827; Metro: Capitol South or Union Station; www.aoc.gov; free admission; 9am–4pm Mon–Sat except Thanksgiving Day and Dec 25) is, like the White House, an iconic American symbol representing the country's democratic form of government. Make a visit here another top priority. Security is tight, but three tour options give you at least a glimpse inside the building where the 435-member House of Representatives and the 100-member Senate enact federal legislation that governs the United States.

Regularly scheduled tours: As I write this, regular 1-hour tours begin at the Capitol Guide Service kiosk located at the southwest corner of the Capitol at First Street and Independence Avenue SW. The tours aren't very satisfactory, but they do get you inside and beneath the Rotunda. On my most recent visit, the guide rambled on about how Congress works; I wanted her to tell us more about the building itself and the murals and sculptures adorning it. The guides do ask for questions, so speak up if you want more information about the objects you see. Even if the guides said nothing, the experience of standing inside the Capitol would be enough incentive to take the tour.

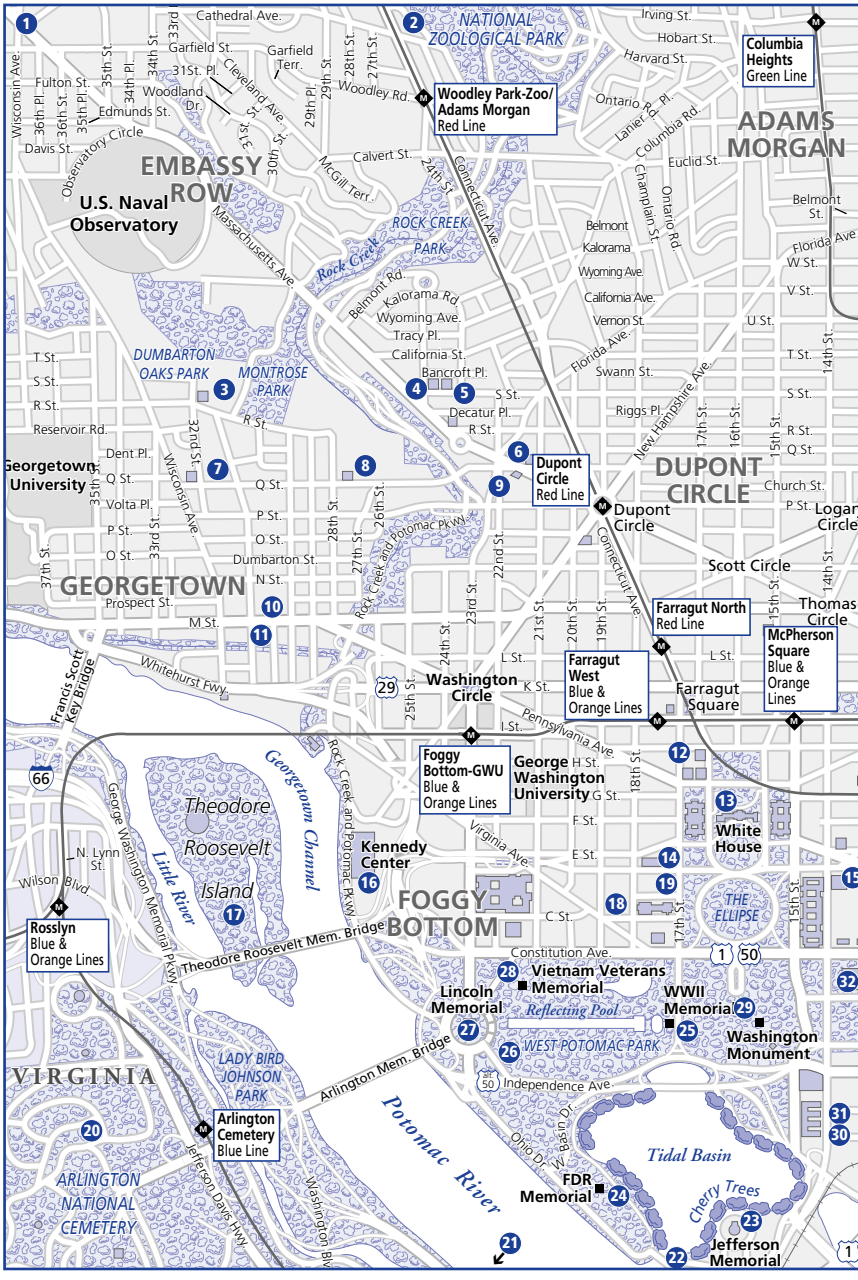
As of early 2007, free timed tickets are distributed beginning at 9am. At busy tourist times, summer, and during the spring Cherry Blossom Festival, the line begins forming as early as 6:30am, and tickets for the rest of the day can be gone by 10am. Only one ticket per person is permitted; each tour is limited to 40 people. When your time slot is called, your tour group will be directed through security and up a ramp to the west face of the Capitol. The view from here up the full length of the Mall to the Washington Monument and beyond to the Lincoln Memorial is the most spectacular in the city. Pause a moment and take it in before you enter the Capitol.

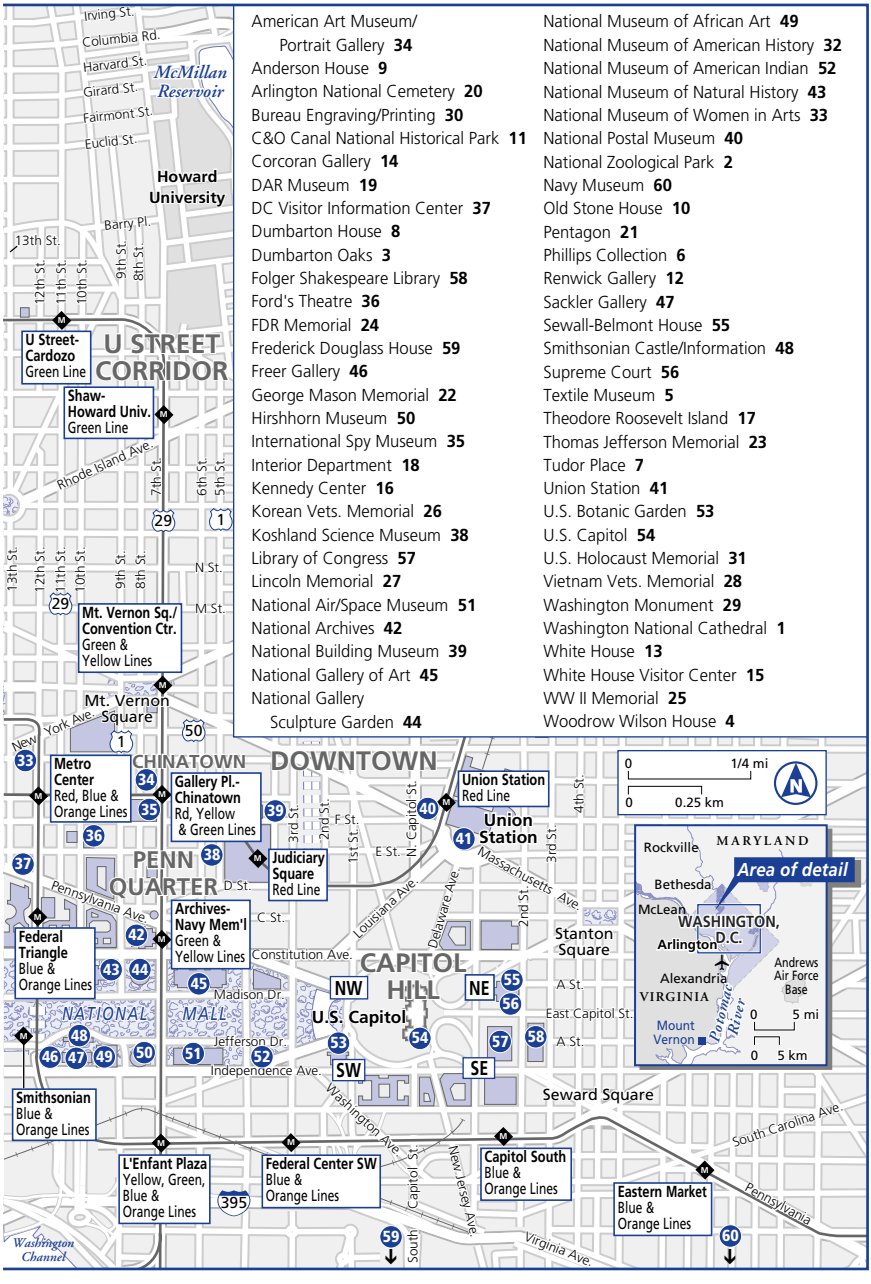
> *"I pray heaven to bestow the best blessings on this house and on all that shall hereafter inhabit it. May none but honest and wise men ever rule under this roof."*
>
> —John Adams in a letter to his wife Abigail from the White House

Inside the Capitol, the guide leads you to the **Rotunda,** the ornate ceremonial heart of the legislative branch where deceased Presidents and other honorees (among them, civil rights heroine Rosa Parks) lie in state. Four giant canvases depicting Revolutionary War scenes—among them the **Surrender of Cornwallis at Yorktown**—hang on the Rotunda walls. John Trumbull, the artist, served as an aide-de-camp to General George Washington during the war. Overhead in the eye of the dome, 180 feet above, is a circular fresco called **The Apotheosis of Washington.** This 1865 fresco depicts Washington, ringed by various symbols of democracy, "rising into the clouds of glory." Two female figures representing Liberty and Victory/Fame are at his side. The Italian-born artist, Constantino Brumidi, created similarly gorgeous, color-splashed frescoes in many of the Capitol's rooms and corridors (called the **Brumidi Corridors**). Working from 1855–1880, he completed so many, in fact, that he sometimes is called the "Michelangelo of the Capitol." At age 72, he had begun the 300-foot frieze (or ornamental band) that rings the base of the dome when he fell, suffering a fatal injury. The frieze, completed by others, illustrates more than 400 years of American history from Columbus' discovery of the New World to the dawn of the age of aviation.

From the Rotunda, the tour continues to the **National Statuary Hall,** formerly called the Old Hall of the House. Once the site where the House met, it had notoriously bad acoustics, which made hearing debates difficult. All efforts to correct the problem failed, so Congress ordered the present House chamber built, and the representatives moved into it in 1857. The old chamber now is lined with statues of notable figures. Every state contributes two statues each to the National Statuary Hall Collection to honor persons notable in their history. If the guide gives you a free moment, look around to see who's there from your home state. You could spot Ethan Allen of Vermont, William Jennings Bryan of Nebraska, Sakakawea of North Dakota (as her name is spelled in the Capitol), Will Rogers of Oklahoma, and Father Junipero Serra of California. The tour concludes at a small museum where exhibits examine the Capitol building's history. On your own, you can visit the **Old Senate Chamber,** which has been restored to look as it did when occupied by the Senate from 1810 to 1859. It housed the Supreme Court of the United States from 1860 to 1935.

Washington, D.C. Attractions





American Art Museum/
Portrait Gallery **34**
Anderson House **9**
Arlington National Cemetery **20**
Bureau Engraving/Printing **30**
C&O Canal National Historical Park **11**
Corcoran Gallery **14**
DAR Museum **19**
DC Visitor Information Center **37**
Dumbarton House **8**
Dumbarton Oaks **3**
Folger Shakespeare Library **58**
Ford's Theatre **36**
FDR Memorial **24**
Frederick Douglass House **59**
Freer Gallery **46**
George Mason Memorial **22**
Hirshhorn Museum **50**
International Spy Museum **35**
Interior Department **18**
Kennedy Center **16**
Korean Vets. Memorial **26**
Koshland Science Museum **38**
Library of Congress **57**
Lincoln Memorial **27**
National Air/Space Museum **51**
National Archives **42**
National Building Museum **39**
National Gallery of Art **45**
National Gallery
Sculpture Garden **44**
National Museum of African Art **49**
National Museum of American History **32**
National Museum of American Indian **52**
National Museum of Natural History **43**
National Museum of Women in Arts **33**
National Postal Museum **40**
National Zoological Park **2**
Navy Museum **60**
Old Stone House **10**
Pentagon **21**
Phillips Collection **6**
Renwick Gallery **12**
Sackler Gallery **47**
Sewall-Belmont House **55**
Smithsonian Castle/Information **48**
Supreme Court **56**
Textile Museum **5**
Theodore Roosevelt Island **17**
Thomas Jefferson Memorial **23**
Tudor Place **7**
Union Station **41**
U.S. Botanic Garden **53**
U.S. Capitol **54**
U.S. Holocaust Memorial **31**
Vietnam Vets. Memorial **28**
Washington Monument **29**
Washington National Cathedral **1**
White House **13**
White House Visitor Center **15**
WW II Memorial **25**
Woodrow Wilson House **4**

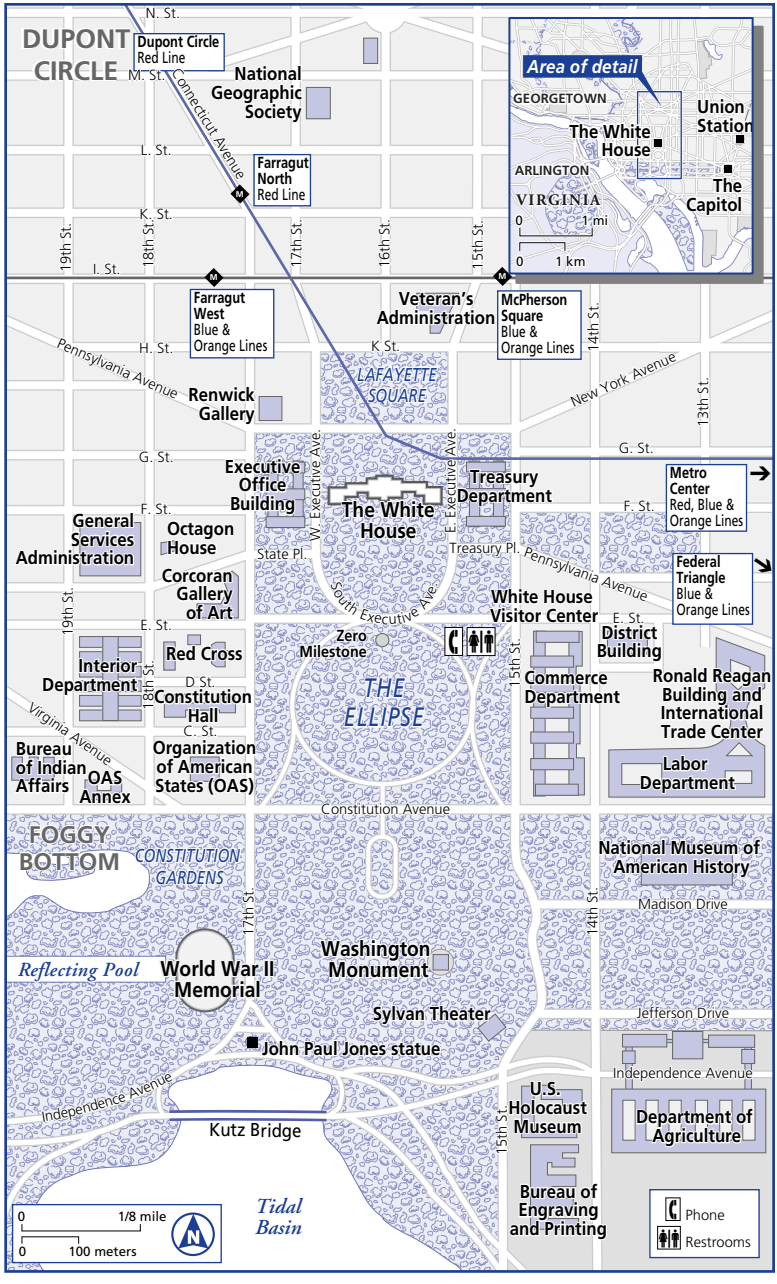
Gallery visits: Many visitors will find the tour insufficient, particularly if they want to see the chambers where the House and Senate meet. Better yet is to watch Congress in session. U.S. residents can request passes in advance to both visitor galleries from one of their senators or their representative. If you forget to plan in advance, you can also pick passes up at legislator offices, located in six buildings adjacent to the Capitol. (Offices of representatives are housed in the Cannon, Longworth, and Rayburn buildings on the Capitol's south side on Independence Avenue. Senate offices are in the Russell, Dirksen, and Hart buildings on the Capitol's north side along Constitution Avenue.) International visitors can obtain passes by presenting non–U.S.-issued photo identification (a passport) after passing through the security check.

The **Washington Post** provides a daily list of Capitol Hill meetings, including when the House and Senate are in session and what committee hearings open to the public are scheduled. With a gallery pass you can attend the legislative sessions. You don't need a pass to sit in on hearings held in the House and Senate office buildings adjacent to the Capitol. But if the hearing is on a controversial topic, chances are Washington insiders will crowd you out.

The U.S. Capitol in Brief

- President George Washington laid the Capitol's cornerstone on Sept 18, 1793. As the country grew, adding more states and more legislators, the building grew with it. In 1857, a new House wing was completed, and the new Senate wing was ready 2 years later. The two additions more than doubled the length of the Capitol. This necessitated the construction of a new steel dome, completed in 1866, because the old one was now out of proportion. The most recent addition was the extension of the East Front, completed in 1962.
- Barely visible on her lofty perch, the bronze Statue of Freedom tops the dome 288 feet above the East Plaza. Her right hand rests on the hilt of a sword; her left hand holds a laurel wreath of victory and the shield of the United States. In his original 1855 drawing, sculptor Thomas Crawford planned to place on her head a "liberty cap," the symbol of freed slaves. But Secretary of War Jefferson Davis—who 6 years later became the president of the Confederacy—objected. As a result, Freedom wears a crested Roman helmet.
- Electric subway cars connect the Dirksen and Hart Senate office buildings with the Capitol. In the presecurity past, senators shared the ride with visitors.
- Washington's low-level skyline is due to a requirement that no building in the city rise higher than the Capitol dome. The restriction does not apply to the adjoining Virginia suburbs, where high-rises are quite visible.

The White House Area



Plan Ahead—How Your State Delegation Can Help You

Because of security concerns, entry into some of the major government buildings requires advance application for free passes. You get them from either of your state's two U.S. senators or from the House of Representatives delegate from your congressional district. Foreign visitors should check with their country's embassy in Washington. See more detailed discussions later in this chapter for each attraction that is affected. A little homework will save you lots of time and hassle on your visit.

Apply well in advance for a:

White House Tour: Tours generally are limited to groups of 10, but individuals can be assigned to a group. Apply up to 6 months in advance.

U.S. Capitol Tour: Same-day tickets are distributed at the Visitor Center, but they go fast from spring to fall. And they don't allow you to visit the galleries overlooking the chambers where the House and Senate meet. Contract a member of your congressional delegation in advance or visit his or her Washington office for a separate pass to each gallery. Also ask about joining a staff-led tour.

Pentagon Tour: The Pentagon's tour office accepts applications for group tours only. Individuals must go through their Washington legislators.

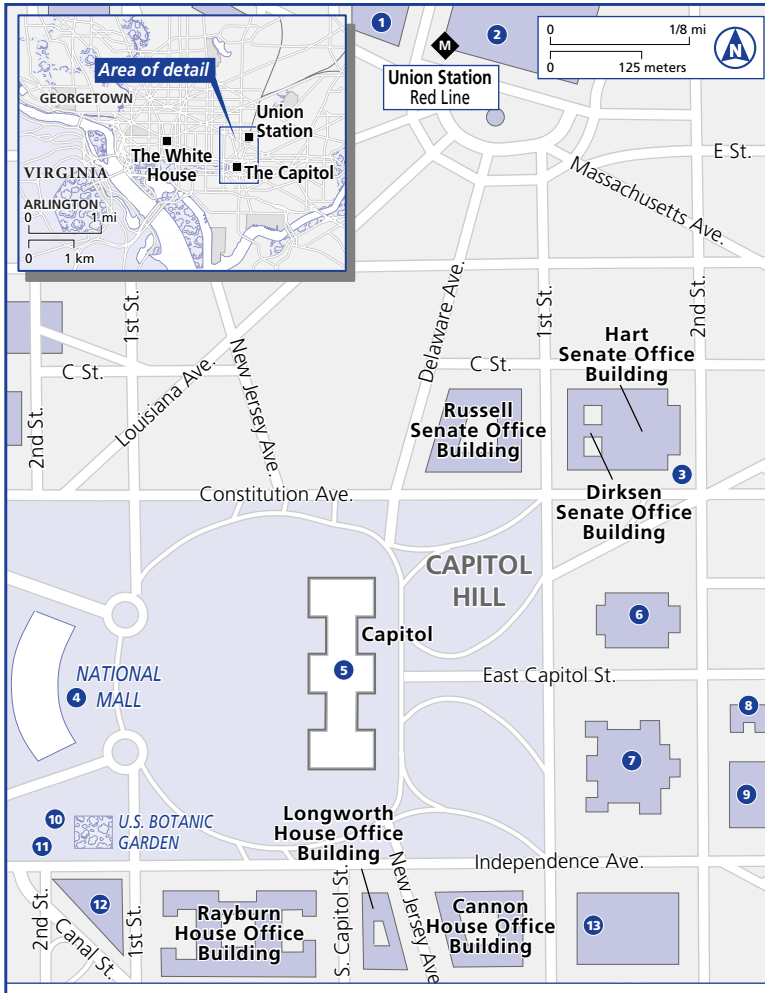
Bureau of Engraving and Printing Tour: From spring to fall, same-day tickets often are gone an hour after the ticket kiosk opens at 8am. Be smart and join a Congressional VIP Tour, courtesy of your representative. Apply up to 6 months in advance.

U.S. State Department Diplomatic Reception Rooms Tour: Passes are available only from your members of Congress.

Staff-led tours: A third option is to join a tour led by a congressional staff member; check with your legislator to find out when one is scheduled. These tours may lack the polish of the professional guides, and historical accuracy may be questionable. But you are apt to see odd nooks and crannies that these generally young staff insiders have discovered on their own. They sometimes, perhaps inadvertently, provide gossipy details about Capitol denizens that the official guides know nothing about.

Note: In summer of 2008, a new underground Visitor Center is expected to open on the east side of the Capitol grounds. But don't be surprised if it remains unfinished; as I write this, the center is already 2 years behind its construction schedule. So keep in mind that the information I provide might change somewhat, particularly the tour route you take to get inside the Capitol.

ABOVE IT ALL The most immediately recognizable structure in the Nation's Capital, the **Washington Monument** ★★ kids (On the Mall at 15th St.; ☎ 202/426-6841; Metro: Smithsonian station; www.nps.gov/wamo; free admission; daily



Bartholdi Fountain **12**
Folger Shakespeare Library **8**
Grant Memorial **4**
Library of Congress
- Thomas Jefferson Building **7**
- James Madison Building **13**
- John Adams Building **9**

National Garden **11**
National Postal Museum **1**
Sewall-Belmont House **3**
Supreme Court **6**
Union Station **2**
U.S. Botanic Garden **10**
U.S. Capitol **5**

except Dec 25 9am–4pm) towers above the city, a fitting tribute to America's first President. A massive white marble obelisk, simple yet commanding in design, it rises in splendid isolation from atop a small hill ringed by acres of terraced, grass-covered parkland. At its base, 50 U.S. flags, one for each state (but not one for the District of Columbia), whip colorfully in the breeze.

Getting the monument erected for the nation's first President proved more difficult than you might imagine. In 1801, the House approved construction of a mausoleum in pyramid shape to receive Washington's remains, but the Senate objected. In 1816 and 1832, a tomb in the Capitol was proposed, but Washington's family members insisted he remain buried at Mount Vernon, as his will requested. Other cities were already constructing memorials, particularly Baltimore where architect Robert Mills designed a 204-foot Doric obelisk. Finally in 1833, a Washington National Monument Society, headed by the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, sponsored a design competition. The winner: None other than Baltimore's Mill, who proposed another taller obelisk. Mill, who became the nation's first federal architect, designed an elaborate base with columns. But it and other features were eliminated to save money, leaving the unadorned obelisk you see.

You may be tempted, as thousands are, to ride the elevator to the top, 555 feet, 5⅛ inches above the National Mall. But keep in mind that you may have to wait a half-hour or more under a hot summer sun; and the 70-second ride in the crowded car (there's only one) with 2 dozen other folks can be claustrophobic. If time is short, take in the dramatic city views from the monument's base and then get on with your sightseeing; you won't have missed that much. I think the view from the steps of the Lincoln Memorial is much more impressive. On its descent, the elevator allows a glimpse of some of the 193 memorial stones imbedded in the interior walls. Contributed by states, cities, and patriotic societies, each honors Washington's memory.

To be assured of a ticket, reserve in advance through the **National Park Reservation Service,** (☎ 800/967-2283 or http://reservations.nps.gov). You will be

The Washington Monument in Brief

- The monument's cornerstone was laid July 4, 1848 by President James K. Polk with U.S. Representative Abraham Lincoln attending.
- Construction stopped for 18 years in 1858 when the monument reached 156 feet because private contributions to pay for the work were insufficient. In 1876, President Ulysses S. Grant approved a congressional act to fund completion, and it was dedicated on February 21, 1885.
- The initial 156 feet were built of marble from a Baltimore, Maryland quarry. In the later stage, some Massachusetts marble was used, but most of the rest came from a second Baltimore quarry. Look carefully, and you'll spot the difference in the marbles.
- The monument is closed temporarily during electrical storms—it is a frequent lightning target—and during high winds, because it sways slightly.

The Lincoln Memorial in Brief

- The seated statue is 19 feet tall and 19 feet wide and made from 28 marble blocks. Lincoln's clenched fist represents strength; compassion is shown in the open, relaxed hand.
- Six brothers from the Piccirilli family of New York did the actual carving of the statue, joined occasionally by sculptor French. It took a year.
- It was dedicated on May 30, 1922, by President Warren G. Harding. Robert Todd Lincoln, Lincoln's only surviving son, attended.
- This isn't Washington's only monument to Lincoln. Dedicated in 1876 in Capitol Hill's **Lincoln Park** (East Capitol and 11th St. NW; Metro: Eastern Market and 6-block walk), the **Emancipation Monument** was erected by the Western Sanitary Commission of St. Louis, Missouri. Funds were collected solely from emancipated citizens declared free by Lincoln's proclamation, which went into effect Jan 1, 1863. The first $5 was contributed by Charlotte Scott, a freed woman from Virginia. Reportedly it was the first money she earned in freedom. President Ulysses S. Grant and his cabinet attended the dedication. Frederick Douglass, the abolitionist, gave the main address.

charged a service fee of $1.50 per ticket plus a 50¢ handling fee per order. Free same-day elevator tickets are distributed from 8am to 4:30pm at the kiosk at 15th Street and Jefferson Drive, just down the hill from the monument. Show up early in the summer and on weekends and holidays because tickets go quickly.

FOUR SCORE AND SEVEN YEARS AGO . . . These familiar words, introducing Abraham Lincoln's majestic Gettysburg Address, are etched into the south wall of the **Lincoln Memorial** ★★ kids (On the Mall at 23rd St.; ☎ 202/426-6841; Metro: Foggy Bottom; www.nps.gov/linc; free admission; daily except Dec 25 8am–midnight). As I read them again recently at the memorial, honoring one of America's wisest and most beloved Presidents, I felt as if Lincoln were watching me, interested perhaps in my 21st-century reaction to his message. You might sense the same thing, too; the Lincoln statue within the memorial really is that life like. Huge in size, it depicts a seated Lincoln, the burdens of guiding the Union through the Civil War etched deeply in his face. He is looking down on the assembled visitors standing at his feet. Designed by Daniel Chester French, a noted sculptor, it is housed in a modified Greek-style temple of marble and limestone patterned after the Parthenon in Athens. Around it, 36 soaring columns represent the 36 states in the Union when Lincoln died at the hands of an assassin.

Before climbing the stairs to the statue, step inside the small museum at the base of the memorial. It details both its construction and, more significantly, the role the memorial has played in civil rights demonstrations and other national events. A video screen replays an excerpt of Marian Anderson, the African-

American opera star, singing "My Country 'Tis of Thee" on the memorial steps. From those same steps, civil rights champion Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., thunders "I have a dream," his momentous speech at the 1963 March on Washington. Those words are now inscribed in the steps leading up to the memorial. The view from the memorial steps, facing east down the length of the Mall past the Washington Monument to the U.S. Capitol, is spectacular.

An elevator inside the museum carries you up to the statue if you can't negotiate the steps. A small bookstore on the statue level sells books about Lincoln and the Civil War. Ranger talks are scheduled frequently; you often can hear a personal impromptu talk simply by asking for one at the ranger desk.

THE TALENTED MR. JEFFERSON In 1962, President John F. Kennedy invited 49 Nobel Prize winners to the White House. "I think this is the most extraordinary collection of talent, of human knowledge, that has ever been gathered at the White House," he told them, "with the possible exception of when Thomas Jefferson dined alone."

America's third president was a man of many and notable talents—scientist, inventor, architect, musician, horticulturist, political philosopher. But he is perhaps best known as the primary author of the Declaration of Independence, an achievement so dear to him that he asked that it be inscribed on his tombstone. An appreciative nation honored his many accomplishments when it established the **Thomas Jefferson Memorial** ★★ kids (On the Mall at East Basin Dr. SW; ☎ 202/426-6841; Metro: Smithsonian; www.nps.gov/thje; free admission; daily except Dec 25 8am–midnight).

The memorial sports a classical look with rounded dome and multiple columns reminiscent of the Pantheon in Rome. The design reflects Jefferson's own architectural taste as represented in Monticello, his plantation home in Virginia, and the original campus of the University of Virginia, which he designed. Beneath the dome, Jefferson stands 19 feet tall in bronze, a robust middle-aged leader formally attired in knee breeches, waistcoat, and a long fur-collared coat. In his hand, he holds a copy of the Declaration of Independence. His gaze, unlike the Lincoln statue, seems to ignore his visitors as he looks across the lake-like Tidal Basin into the historic heart of the city he helped create. You can't blame him; the view, which takes in the Washington Monument, is grand.

The memorial was dedicated on April 13, 1943 on the 200th anniversary of Jefferson's birth by President Franklin D. Roosevelt, an admirer who actively supported the project. (The Roosevelt Memorial, also on the Tidal Basin, is a 10-minute walk away.) A visit here takes only a few minutes. Go to pay homage to a Founding Father or at least to be reminded of what an individual can accomplish in a free country. The most appealing way to approach is to walk the paved trail called Cherry Tree Walk around the Tidal Basin, lined with the city's famed Japanese cherry trees (about 3 miles round trip if you circle the entire basin). Then climb the stairs to read some of Jefferson's words etched into the memorial walls. "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal," the opening of the Declaration of Independence, is one of the most famous phrases in the English language.

The Supreme Court in Brief

- The building was completed in 1935; for the previous 146 years, the justices sat elsewhere. Initially the Court met in New York City and Philadelphia, when the two cities were the seat of government. When the government moved to Washington, the Court got a room in the new Capitol, but it had to move periodically. From 1819, it sat in what is now called the Old Supreme Court Chamber. From 1860 to 1935, the Old Senate Chamber was its home.
- Busts of former Chief Justices sit either in niches or on marble pedestals along the Great Hall's side walls. A life-size seated statue of Chief Justice John Marshall is located in the Lower Great Hall. Marshall's judicial and political astuteness enhanced and confirmed the Supreme Court's power to rule on the Constitutional legality of congressional legislation.
- Overhead in the Courtroom, sculpted figures line all four walls depicting legal themes and famous lawgivers, including Confucius and Moses.

A small museum at the monument's base details its construction. A bookshop, gift shop, restrooms, and an elevator to the statue (if you can't climb the stairs) are located there also. Rangers are present to answer questions and give both scheduled and impromptu talks.

FIRST MONDAY IN OCTOBER All but hidden behind the U.S. Capitol, the third equal branch of the U.S. government, the judicial, is often overlooked by time-constrained visitors. But it shouldn't be. On some days, the **Supreme Court of the United States** ★★ (1st St. NE at East Capitol St. behind the U.S. Capitol; ☎ 202/479-3030; Metro: Capitol South or Union Station; www.supremecourtus.gov; free admission; Mon–Fri except holidays 9am–4:30pm) is the most exciting place to be in town. Beginning each annual session on the first Monday in October, the nine justices hear cases and render opinions that can dramatically affect every American. Visitors are invited to sit in on arguments between lawyers for opposing sides, who are typically questioned sharply by the justices. It's a grand show, fast-paced, sometimes heated, and always full of weighty import. And you get a close-up seat.

Between October and April, the Court hears up to four 1-hour arguments a day on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday; this is done in 2-week intervals, that is, 2 weeks on and 2 weeks off. Cases are presented at 10 and 11am and 1 and 2pm. Check the schedule in the *Washington Post* or on the Supreme Court website (see above) by clicking "argument calendar." When court is in session, two lines form in the plaza outside the courthouse. One line is for people who want to hear an entire argument; they are seated beginning at 9:30am. The other line is for visitors seeking only a 3- to 5-minute peek at the justices in action; they are shuffled in and out quietly beginning at 10am. If a major case is being argued, the lines for the morning sessions begin to form as early as 6am. Lines for the afternoon

Iconic Arlington Sites

When America goes to war, or acts to prevent one, the **Pentagon** ★ (On the Virginia side of the Potomac River immediately south of Arlington National Cemetery; ☎ 703/697-1776, tour desk; Metro: Pentagon; http://pentagon.afis.osd.mil; free tours; Mon–Fri except Federal holidays 9am–5pm, with advance reservations only) is thrust repeatedly into the headlines. The headquarters for the Department of Defense is a household name known around the world. Nearly everybody who comes to Washington for the first time wants a look at it, even if they can't easily get inside these days.

Virtually a city in itself, the huge five-sided structure (thus its name) covers 34 acres and possesses more floor space than New York's Empire State Building. That space is occupied by 25,000 military and civilian employees. Completed in 1943 during World War II, it is threaded by more than 17½ miles of corridors. Yet Pentagon officials maintain that it is so efficiently designed that staffers can walk between any two points in the building in 7 minutes. The distinctive shape stems from the location of the originally designated site, which was bordered by five roadways. Ultimately a different site was chosen, but the design remained. Three shifts worked 24 hours a day to complete its construction in an amazing 16 months from groundbreaking.

Pentagon tours have been scheduled regularly since 1976 when they were inaugurated as an American Bicentennial event. But you must have advance reservations to enter. Individuals can apply for a tour through their senators or representative. Visitors to the Pentagon who are 18 and older will be asked for two forms of identification, one of which must be a photo ID. Ages 13 to 17 need only a photo ID or a parent or guardian to vouch for them.

Typically a tour lasts 45 minutes to an hour and covers about 1½ miles inside the building. The guides are hand-picked active duty personnel from the National Capitol Region's military ceremonial units. They are required to learn about 20 pages of informational material outlining the mission of

sessions, if scheduled, may begin to form at 9:30am. When the Court is not in session, you can sit in on an informative 25-minute lecture about the court and the building—designed in classical Greek style by Cass Gilbert—that houses it. The lecture I attended most recently was funny, gossipy, and full of insider anecdotes about the court's day-to-day operation. Held in the Courtroom itself, the lectures are scheduled hourly from 9:30am to 3:30pm. In the **Lower Great Hall,** one floor below, exhibits provide more details on the court's history and function.

AN AMERICAN BEAUTY The nation's literary treasure trove, the **Library of Congress** ★★ (1st St. SE at Independence Ave. behind the U.S. Capitol; ☎ 202/707-8000; Metro: Capitol South or Union Station; www.loc.gov; free admission; Mon–Sat except federal holidays 10am–5:30pm) boasts one of the most beautiful

each military branch. As I write this, a ceremonial garden is under construction honoring the 184 men and women who died when the hijacked airliner crashed into the Pentagon on September 11, 2001. The garden is expected to be completed in September 2008.

The second iconic Arlington site is the nation's most important cemetery. In an odd twist of historical fate, 200 acres of property in nearby Virginia belonging to the family of Robert E. Lee—the same Lee who commanded Confederate troops in the Civil War—became the burial site for 16,000 Union troops. This was the founding core of **Arlington National Cemetery** ★★ (Directly across Arlington Memorial Bridge from the Lincoln Memorial; ☎ 703/607-8000; Metro: Arlington Cemetery; www.arlingtoncemetery.org; free admission; Apr 1–Sept 30 daily 8am–7pm and 8am–5pm the rest of the year), the best known of the country's more than 100 national cemeteries. Today more than 300,000 men and women are interred here. They include veterans from all the nation's wars from the American Revolution (reinterred after 1900) through the Iraq and Afghanistan wars. Funerals average about 28 a day. These are private ceremonies; often the firing of a funereal gun salute echoes across the shady grounds.

The cemetery is clearly visible from much of the Mall. At its summit is **Arlington House** (☎ 703/235-1530; www.nps.gov/arho). The distinctive landmark was the antebellum-style home of Robert E. Lee, which he lost when he joined the Confederate Army. Near the foot of the slope, directly beneath Arlington House, is **President John F. Kennedy's Gravesite.** At night, its famous eternal flame often can be seen flickering from river view points on the Mall, and especially from the Lincoln Memorial. First Lady Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis is buried at his side, and brother Robert Kennedy is nearby.

For more on the cemetery and its sights, see the walking tour of it on p. 178.

interiors of any public building in the country. Anything but the stuffy domain of dusty legislative tomes you might expect, it's also full of fun. Really.

First the beauty. Climb the staircase from the Visitor Entrance (ground or basement floor) of the Thomas Jefferson Building, the library's main building (built in 1897), to the **Great Hall** on the first floor. Entering it may take your breath away; you may almost think you have stepped into a lavish European palace. The ceiling, soaring 75 feet above the marble floor, is adorned with stained glass skylights. The room and adjoining corridors are a tapestry of gold leaf, colorful marble mosaics, ornately painted walls and ceilings. Murals and statuary are in profusion. The Library occupies two other buildings on Capitol Hill, the John

Adams (built in1938) and James Madison Memorial (built in 1981) buildings, but it's the Jefferson you want to see.

Founded in 1800 to serve the research needs of the U.S. Congress, the contents were burned by the British in the War of 1812. Thomas Jefferson, retired as President, immediately offered his lifetime collection of 6,487 books as a replacement. Congress paid him $23,950. Today, it's the world's largest library. In the collection are more than 130 million items on approximately 530 miles of bookshelves. The collections include more than 29 million books and other printed materials, 2.7 million recordings, 12 million photographs, 4.8 million maps, and 58 million manuscripts.

As you explore, don't miss the **Gutenberg Bible of 1455** in the East Corridor. It's one of only three perfect copies printed on hand-made parchment still known to exist. Another important item: the 1649 Bay Psalm Book by Stephen Daye, the first book printed in what is now the United States. The Library's copy is one of 11 that survive and one of five that are in their original bindings. The exhibits rotate, but you might spot a first edition of *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz,* President Woodrow Wilson's reading script of his 1918 "Fourteen Points" address, an early *Wonder Woman* comic book, or the contents of Abraham Lincoln's pockets the night he was assassinated. As for fun, head back down to the ground floor for the **Bob Hope Gallery of American Entertainment,** a musical tour through the age of vaudeville. The comedian's joke file, totaling more than 89,000 pages, has been digitally scanned and indexed. Visitors can call up examples to read by subject matter.

You can take a self-guided tour using a brochure distributed at the Visitors Center. Guided tours are offered Monday though Friday at 10:30 and 11:30am and 1:30, 2:30, and 3:30pm; on Saturday, the 2:30pm tour is the latest.

ICONIC MUSEUMS

As I've noted before, there are scores of museums in Washington. But three are so grand in scope and ambition, so profound in their impact upon the visitor that they have to be counted as iconic experiences.

ART OF THE MASTERS The only painting in the United States by the master Florentine artist Leonardo da Vinci hangs in the **National Gallery of Art** ★★★ (On the Mall at Madison Drive between 3rd and 7th sts. NW; ☎ 202/737-4215; Metro: Archives-Navy Memorial or Smithsonian; www.nga.gov; free admission; Mon–Sat 10am–5pm and Sun 11am–6pm except Dec 25 and Jan 1). This fact alone indicates the high caliber of artworks housed in this world-class museum. Gaze at paintings of such giants as Monet, Manet, Van Gogh, Gauguin, Renoir, and Cezanne—to name only a few of the impressive array of French Impressionists.

The Gallery's collections are housed in two buildings, the classical **West Building,** which was the largest marble structure in the world when it opened in 1941, and the East Building, a modernistic sculptural work of art in itself designed by famed architect I. M. Pei and dedicated in 1978. They are linked by a subterranean concourse, where you will find a delightful food court and gift shop. The West Building houses European art from the 13th through the 19th centuries and American painting and sculpture from the colonial era to the early 20th century. Find modern and contemporary art in the **East Building.** Art

enthusiasts will shudder when I say that you can make a hurried survey of the West Building's Main Floor galleries in about 2 hours and the East Building in 30 minutes more. But it's true—most of what you want to see in the West Building is located on the Main Floor. (This is where you'll see the collection's works by Titian, Rembrandt, Goya, El Greco, Raphael, or Rubens, among many familiar names.) The art is conveniently grouped according to school in rough chronological order. If 15th-century Netherlandish works don't interest you, they can easily be skipped.

But first head for Gallery 6 (Italian paintings from the 13th to the 15th centuries), where the Leonardo hangs. This small painting, **Ginevra de' Benci,** dating to about 1474, is an exquisite portrait of a young and wealthy woman of Florence. Leonardo is believed to have used his hands to smooth the surface of the paint on her face. On a facing wall is **Portrait of a Youth** (1485) by Florentine artist Filippino Lippi. A handsome young man in bright red cap, he seems to be staring in rapt admiration.

The school of 17th-century Italian, Spanish, and French works is highlighted by Bartolome Esteban Murillo's charming **Two Women at a Window** (c. 1655/60, Gallery 34). Murillo is famed for his somber religious works, but this one captures a cheerful moment in everyday life. The 17th century Dutch and Flemish school provides us with Sir Anthony van Dyck's **Queen Henrietta Maria and Her Dwarf** (1633, Gallery 43). Art experts say this work serves as an excellent example of why he enjoyed phenomenal success. Henrietta is shown as a tall woman with a handsome oval face. In fact, she was petite and had a very round face. Her idealized portrait surely pleased her.

A fitting climax to the West Wing survey is the 19th-century French school. This is probably the National Gallery's most popular draw. It includes Vincent van Gogh's **Self-Portrait** (1889, Gallery 84) and **La Mousme** (1888, Gallery 84), which depicts a young girl in bright red dress and is said to have been a favorite work of his.

The East Building is not so neatly organized. Its multiple odd angles and varied levels create nooks and crannies that the museum map won't much help you find. But look for Georgia O'Keeffe's **Jack-in-the-Pulpit No. IV** (1930), easily recognizable for its vivid spotlight on a tiny flower; Piet Mondrian's similarly identifiable **Diamond Painting in Red, Yellow and Blue** (c. 1921/25); Henri Matisse's color-filled **Open Window at Collioure** (1905); and one of Pablo Picasso's studies of circus performers, **Family of Saltimbanques** (1904/05). They serve as an introductory course in 20th-century western art.

Check at the West Building information desk for free escorted tours of the collections. Audio lecture devices may be rented for $5 per person.

MILESTONES OF FLIGHT As soon as you step into its soaring entrance gallery, the Smithsonian Institution's **National Air and Space Museum** ★★ kids (On the Mall at Jefferson Dr. between 4th and 7th sts. SW; ☎ 202/633-1000; Metro: Smithsonian; www.nasm.si.edu; free admission; daily 10am–5:30pm except Dec 25; extended summer hours determined annually) will grab your imagination and not let go. You could be in danger of spending the rest of your vacation here. Surely the Mall's most popular museum, it's a mix of contemporary history and action-packed adventure. Dangling from the ceiling just inside the door is the original

The Outdoor Sculpture Garden

After racing through seven centuries of art history, step outside to the National Gallery's delightful **Sculpture Garden** (free admission; Mon–Sat 10am–5pm and Sun 11am–6pm, except Memorial Day to Labor Day Mon–Thurs and Sat 10am–7pm, Fri 10am–9pm and Sun 11am–7pm). Occupying 6.1 acres, a full city block, at the gallery's west end, it is a generally quiet haven for contemplation. Sip a cup of tea at the small cafe, which tempts with outdoor seating. The garden, a mini-forest of 35 varieties of decorative trees, encircles a giant pool and fountain. In winter the pool doubles as an ice-skating rink. More than 15 modern sculptures are scattered beneath the trees. The most whimsical certainly is Claes Oldenburg's giant **Typewriter Eraser, Scale X** (1999), a stainless steel and cement rendition of a now obsolete item. Scott Burton's **Six-Part Seating** (1985/1998) groups six red polished stone chairs in a circle, inviting you to sit and rest awhile. Yes, go ahead and do it. Youngsters will grin at Barry Flanagan's **Thinker on a Rock** (1997), a bronze take-off of Rodin's *Thinker,* except this thinker is a giant hare with three-foot long ears thrusting skyward.

Spirit of St. Louis, flown by Charles Lindbergh in 1927 on the first solo transatlantic flight. Beneath it rests the **Apollo 11 command module Columbia;** it brought back the astronauts from their visit to the Moon in 1969—an artifact with wow appeal for every generation. Nearby is one of the museum's most popular items, the **Moon Rock,** a small, smooth slice of basalt 4 billion years old. Rub your fingers across it (permitted) and tell the folks back home you've been to the Moon.

No other museum covers the history of flight so extensively, so you are going to want to try and see it all. Be selective and concentrate on the galleries that most interest you. The two floors of exhibits are divided between **Airplanes and Aviation** at the museum's west end and **Rockets and Spaceflight** at the east end.

If you opt for the west wing, the upstairs floor has the most to offer, especially for nostalgic older visitors. At the top of the escalator, dangling above the massive **Hall of Air Transportation,** is a Ford 5AT-Trimotor, the **"Tin Goose,"** which was the largest passenger ship when it went into commercial service on Aug 2, 1926. Noisy, but considered reliable—although quite cramped—it helped convince the public of flight safety. Aloft nearby is a **Douglas DC-3,** a twin-engine, 22-seat aircraft first flown in 1935; some are still in use. Reliable, inexpensive, and easy to operate, it is considered the most successful aircraft in history.

Here you'll also pay homage to the **Wright brothers,** Wilbur and Orville, whose 1903 Wright Flyer is honored (along with the Wrights) in a gallery of its own. On Dec 17, 1903, the duo launched the Flyer in four short but historical

flights from a sand dune at Kitty Hawk, N.C. Though incredibly flimsy, it was the first manned, power-driven, heavier-than-air craft to fly. The Smithsonian acquired the Flyer in 1948 on the death of Orville Wright.

In **World War II Aviation,** you can see the actual fighter planes that dueled in the air in both the European and Asian theaters. Here are the war's legendary craft: the British Spitfire, credited with defending England in the Battle of Britain; its versatile but out-maneuvered opponent, the German Messerschmitt; the Mitsubishi Zero, Japan's primary naval fighter plane; and the North American Mustang, considered the best piston-engine fighter in the world. This is a not-to-be missed museum highlight.

But maybe your eyes and thoughts are on the future. On the first floor in the **Space Race** gallery, your questions about how astronauts live in space are answered. (You'll even learn how they go to the bathroom in space.) Upstairs, the east wing's second-floor **Apollo to the Moon** displays personal items from the early spaceflights such as razors, sunglasses, and survival gear. Back downstairs, **Rocketry and Space Flight** delves into the complexities of rockets, engines, and spacecraft. All around you these amazing devices stand ready for your inspection. Until the National Museum of American History reopens in 2008, this area also will display some of its most popular artifacts in a "Treasures of American History" exhibition.

One suggestion: On arrival, head immediately for the museum's **Welcome Center** to score tickets to the giant-screen **IMAX** show or a simulated voyage among the stars at the **Albert Einstein Planetarium.** They do sell out. Admission is $8.50 adults, $7.50 seniors (60-plus), and $7 children (2–12). Or order tickets in advance at ☎ 202/633-4629 or www.si.edu/imax; I highly recommend advance purchase if you are visiting Washington during the Cherry Blossom festival or the busy July/August tourist season. The planetarium's Infinity Express, a 20-minute tour of the universe (using images from the Hubble Space Telescope and Mars Global Surveyor), departs every half-hour from 10:30am to 4:30pm. Pricing is the same as IMAX. At 5pm Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday, the planetarium's **The Stars Tonight** kids is a free tour of the night's sky.

The Steven F. Udvar-Hazy Center

Aircraft too large and too numerous to display in the Mall building are now on exhibit at the Air and Space Museum's hanger-sized companion facility located near Dulles International Airport in the Virginia suburbs. Opened in 2003, it is named for the aviation businessman who contributed $60 million to establish it. Together, the two sites spotlight the largest collection of aviation and space artifacts in the world. Perhaps the Udvar-Hazy Center's most famous plane is the **B-29 Superfortress Enola Gay,** which dropped the world's first atomic bomb on Hiroshima on August 6, 1945. Shuttle service from the Mall building was discontinued in late 2006. Get driving instructions at the museum's Welcome Center.

ELEPHANT ON PARADE Sadly, the giant stuffed bull elephant (the largest mounted specimen in the world) that greets visitor's in the four-story rotunda of the Smithsonian's **National Museum of Natural History** ★ kids (On the Mall at Madison Dr. between 9th and 12th sts. NW; ☎ 202/633-1000; Metro: Smithsonian and Federal Triangle; www.mnh.si.edu; free admission; daily 10am–5:30pm except Dec 25; extended summer hours determined annually) was downed in 1954 by a hunter who then donated the hide and tusks to the museum. His unfortunate tale puts something of a damper on a walk through the Hall of Mammals, where more than 250 other mounted creatures occupy the life-like settings they once knew. Still, I like to think that the dramatic poses they have been given carry a message of wildlife preservation. And the museum displays lots of other fascinating wonders of nature, among them re-assembled dinosaur bones, fantastic gems, and a lively (and living) insect zoo. The Smithsonian justifiably considers the eight-sided, 125-foot-high Rotunda itself "one of Washington, D.C.'s splendid spaces."

The **Geology, Gems, and Minerals** exhibit may be the museum's most appealing draw. It displays jewelry of exquisite cut and untold value. Awarded its own exhibit room, the legendary 45.5-caret **Hope Diamond** rotates slowly behind glass. Found in India in the 1600s, it is a surprising blue, the color the result of a minor impurity reflecting in the light. In an adjoining room are more fabulous jewels, including Marie Antoinette's diamond earrings, a gift from her husband, King Louis XVI of France. For my wife, I would choose (if I were a king) the exhibit's emerald and diamond necklace boasting 336 diamonds, believed to have been worn by Spanish royalty in the 17th century.

Just as color-saturated, but fluttering, the woefully overlooked **Butterfly Habitat Garden,** offers a splendid counterpoint to the gems. It all but shimmers with these ethereal creatures. Stretching between Constitution Avenue NW and Madison Drive, the slender garden creates four different butterfly habitats: wetlands (with a small pond), meadow, woods edge, and backyard (with a guide to what you might introduce at home). About 700 species of butterflies have been recorded worldwide; about 80 have been identified in Washington.

More mundane but still fascinating, especially to kids, is the second floor's **O. Orkin Insect Zoo** kids, where most of the crawly things are alive and, well, crawling. You learn that the U.S. hosts 50 species of cockroaches (some displayed), only four of which are household pests. See tarantulas, centipedes, and other bad guys. The **Discovery Room** kids is another kid attraction. Hands on interactive natural history exhibits help calm down youngsters who can get as squirmy as those bugs.

EIGHT MORE VERY IMPORTANT SIGHTS

Don't think of the next attractions as also-rans. Each holds a significant place in the national story, as do the many museums of the Smithsonian which I list below.

NATIONAL FILING CABINET Every government needs a place to store its important documents, and for the U.S. government's tons of paper and heaps of film reels it's the **National Archives** ★ (Just off the Mall on Constitution Ave. between 7th and 9th sts. NW; ☎ 866/272-6272; Metro: Archives-Navy Memorial; www.archives.gov; free admission; 10am–9pm daily Memorial Day weekend to Labor Day, 10am–7pm Apr 1 to Memorial Day Friday, 10am–5:30pm Labor Day to

March 31 except Dec 25). "Democracy starts here," claims the National Archives with justification. Carefully preserved in the mausoleum-like **Rotunda for the Charters of Freedom** are American's three most cherished democratic documents: the original **Declaration of Independence, U.S. Constitution,** and **Bill of Rights**. Though faded and nearly unreadable, they still pack plenty of emotional power. During busy periods, expect to do some assertive wriggling to get yourself directly in front of their cases. Other cases on each side of the Big Three display more treasured documents.

If you're in a hurry, the above are the must-sees, but you could spend another hour profitably. In the adjacent West Rotunda Gallery is one of only four originals of the **Magna Carta** of 1297, the founding document of English common law. It is the only copy permanently in the United States. A few steps away are the **Public Vaults**, where a few of the 8 billion pages of text, millions of photographs, and hundreds of thousands of films are put on display. This is a real treasure house of historical curiosities, which are changed from year to year to limit their exposure to light. You might read a letter Washington wrote as commanding general of the Continental Army; see a video of George Bush, the father, joking about his dislike of broccoli; and hear Franklin D. Roosevelt deliver one of his 31 Fireside Chats over the radio.

The vaults are a research center drawing thousands exploring their family histories, filming documentaries, chasing historical mysteries, or building their case in court.

THE MONEY FACTORY Want to see stacks of money piled high? Thousands of dollars, even millions, though you can't touch even a single buck? Then catch a 45-minute tour at the **Bureau of Engraving and Printing** kids (14th and C sts. SW, adjacent to the Holocaust Memorial and the Mall; ☎ 202/874-2330 and toll-free ☎ 866/874-2330; Metro: Smithsonian; www.moneyfactory.com; free admission; 8:30am–3pm Mon–Fri except federal holidays and the week between Dec 25 and Jan 1).

Free same-day tickets for the escorted tour are required from March through August because of the money-bedazzled (who isn't?) throngs who want to see how America's paper currency is made. The ticket booth, inconveniently located at the tour exit at Raoul Wallenberg Place and Independence Avenue SW, opens at 8am, but lines form as early as 6:30am, and tickets all may be gone by 9am. Tickets are not required to enter the Visitor Center, which features exhibits on currency printing. *Insider tip:* To avoid standing in line, join a Congressional VIP Tour (p. 96). You can apply for a ticket up to six months in advance by contacting your U.S. senator or representative.

On the tour, you are led along an overhead walkway high above the factory room floor, where bills are printed in large sheets like postage stamps and then trimmed to wallet size. A recent addition to the guide's spiel is information about new security measures to thwart counterfeiters. Subtle shades of red and blue are now incorporated in the design.

The tour is pretty basic and hardly worth your while if you are rushed, but—a big but—the kids will love it. They get a real kick out of guessing how much moollah they see temptingly spread out before them. A five-foot-high stack of sheets of $1 bills (as tall as most kids) is worth $320,000 when trimmed. If $100

20th-Century Heroes

A trio of famous monuments commemorate the sacrifices of three generations of soldiers.

WORLD WAR II Placed in a prime (although controversial) location between the Washington Monument and Lincoln Memorial, the **World War II Memorial** ★ (17th St. on the Mall; ☎ 202/619-7222; Metro: Smithsonian; www.wwiimemorial.com; free admission; daily 8am–midnight) is the city's newest national monument. Dedicated May 29, 2004, it serves as a grateful thank you to the generation of Americans who, emerging from the Depression, fought and won one of the most terrible wars in the history of the world. It was funded mostly by private donations.

Although its purpose is unquestioned, the memorial's design has been criticized, justly I think, as old-fashioned—certainly when compared to the eloquent Vietnam Veteran's Memorial nearby. Oval in shape, ringing a large sunken pool, it certainly is impressive in size. But the design harks back to monuments of the past—a sort of stodgy look that recalls Washington's early fixation with Old World symbols. Its expansive, empty marble spaces strike me as austere and unfeeling.

Still, the design is full of meaningful details, noting the sacrifices of the more than 16 million Americans who served, the more than 400,000 who died, and all those who supported their efforts at home. Twin pavilions at the north and south ends of the pool commemorate the victory fought across two oceans, the Atlantic and Pacific. The 56 rectangular pillars standing smartly at attention alongside the pavilions represent the states, territories, and the District of Columbia. Along the entrance, a dozen bas-relief sculptures depict America at war. On the far side, the Freedom Wall displays 4,000 gold stars, a tribute to those who died in the war.

Warning: In summer, plan your visit early in the morning or in late afternoon because the midday sun reflecting off the marble is brutal.

KOREAN WAR It may be the least known of the National Mall's major war memorials, but the **Korean War Veterans Memorial** ★ (On the Mall at Independence Ave. and the Lincoln Memorial; ☎ 202/426-6841; Metro: Foggy Bottom; www.nps.gov/kowa; free admission; 8am–midnight daily except Dec 25) could be the one that you remember longest—and tell the folks at home about. It is a very realistic representation of a squad of 19 U.S. servicemen on patrol in rugged, wind-blown Korean terrain. Cast slightly larger than life in stainless steel, they show the haggard, almost ghostly look of wary veterans ever alert for a hidden enemy. Heavily armed and wearing ponchos, reflecting the harsh weather, they seem actually to be moving cautiously ahead as you walk beside them—in effect joining them for a few moments on their dangerous mission.

The Korean War broke out on June 25, 1950, when communist North Korea launched a surprise attack on South Korea. A total of 1.5 million Americans served in the conflict; more than 50,000 died.

VIETNAM WAR Architect Maya Ying Lin's goal was to design a quiet, protected place to honor American troops who died in the Vietnam War. And, in fact, a hush settles on the throngs, as if in a cathedral, as they read some of the 58,245 names etched onto the polished black granite walls of the **Vietnam Veterans Memorial** ★ (On the Mall at 21st St. and Constitution Ave. NW, adjacent to the Lincoln Memorial; ☎ 202/426-6841; Metro: Foggy Bottom; www.nps.gov/vive; free admission; 8am–11:45pm daily except Dec 25). Many family members and other visitors leave flowers or mementos at the base of the wall; the National Park Service regularly gathers them up, cataloguing significant items and disposing of faded blooms. It is always interesting to see what mementos people leave.

The walls stretch 247 feet, the East Wall end pointing to the Washington Monument and the West Wall to the Lincoln Memorial. The inscribed names are listed chronologically from first death to last. About 1,000 names, designated by a cross, are of those who were either prisoners or missing at the end of the war and who remain unaccounted for. The memorial founders wanted the names to signify war "as a series of individual human sacrifices." To Lin, the names themselves are the real memorial. At either end of the walls is a small covered stand with a large catalog listing where on the walls a specific name is found.

Jan Scruggs, a former infantry corporal in the war, conceived the idea of a Vietnam Veterans Memorial, and a group of veterans from Washington, D.C. incorporated a nonprofit charitable organization in 1979. One stipulation was that whatever design was chosen should not make a political statement. The founders hoped to separate the controversial policy issues of the war from the men and women who served in Vietnam. In that way, they believed America would begin the important process of reconciliation. The memorial was dedicated in 1982.

The walls are an impressionistic sculpture, evocative of the grief of lost loved ones. But two life-like statues have since been added. At the east end, the **Vietnam Women's Memorial** is dedicated to the more than 11,000 American women who served in the military in Vietnam. The **Three Servicemen Statue** at the west end shows a trio of young men, heavily armed and alert. Their youthful innocence is in sharp contrast to the potent weapons of war they carry.

Note: Informative ranger talks are held at all three of the memorials.

bills are being printed, the same stack of sheets is worth $32 million. As might be expected, nobody gets close enough to snatch a few samples.

RENDEZVOUS WITH DESTINY Something was lacking when this memorial to the country's only President elected to four terms was unveiled in 1997. Nothing showed him as physically disabled, which indeed he was throughout his presidency; he was partially paralyzed as a victim of polio. The protests that ensued, many from wheelchair users, resulted in a 2001 statue of Roosevelt seated, as he often was, in a wheelchair. Look for it at the **Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial** ★ (On the Mall at West Basin Drive in West Potomac Park between Ohio Drive and Independence Avenue SW; ☎ 202/426-6841; Metro: Smithsonian; www.nps.gov/frde; free admission; 8am–midnight daily except Dec 25). Overlooking the Tidal Basin, this is a subdued memorial, one not designed to awe but to invite contemplation in the many cool, quiet alcoves formed by ornamental rock walls. The memorial is laid out in the form of four "outdoor" or garden rooms, each commemorating one of Roosevelt's four terms in chronological order. If you go, make sure you carry this guide; otherwise the significance of what you are seeing may not be clear. At the entrance or "Prologue," a life-size bronze statue shows Roosevelt seated in a modest wheel chair. In the First Room, look for a relief sculpture depicting his first inaugural. In the Second Room, statues of a rural couple—the Appalachian Couple—and of worry-worn men standing in a 1930s bread line suggest the despair of the times. A nation beginning to regain hope is illustrated by the sculpture of a man listening to one of Roosevelt's Fireside Chats. In the Third Room, we see Roosevelt the war president, seated and wrapped in the warm cloak famous in photographs. Elsewhere, First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt is given her due in a flattering statue. She was as much beloved as her husband. In the Fourth Room, Roosevelt's death is marked by a sculptural relief of his funeral cortege.

National Park Service ranger talks are scheduled regularly; they are listed in the Visitor Center.

CAUSE FOR REFLECTION Much of what you come to Washington to see is inspirational or at least entertaining. The **U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum** ★★★ (Adjacent to the Mall at 100 Raoul Wallenberg Place SW, but use the entrance at 14th St. and Independence Ave.; ☎ 202/488-0400; Metro: Smithsonian; www.ushmm.org; free admission; 10am–5:30pm daily except Yom Kippur and Dec 25), essentially detailing a multi-year atrocity—the murder of six million Jews and others—is horrific and emotionally draining. What makes a visit endurable is the strength and courage displayed by the survivors, who recall their experiences in heart-wrenching detail. They offer up their awful trial in the hope that no other people will suffer as they did.

Of the many museums I describe in this guide, the Holocaust Memorial, which opened in 1993, is the one you cannot visit in a rush. To absorb the lessons of the Permanent Exhibition, presented in numerous audio-visual exhibits and seemingly miles of printed text, plan to spend a minimum of two hours. Even though I cite it as a must-see attraction, if your time is limited you might consider saving the museum for a return visit to the city. For your sake and that of other

visitors, don't bring children under the age of 11. They may be frightened by what they see, which includes graphic images of brutality and death.

Free timed passes are distributed daily on a first-come basis inside the museum for admission to the Permanent Exhibition. From April through July, they can go quickly. Order passes in advance by calling Tickets.com at ☎ 800/400-9373. A "convenience" fee of $1.75 per ticket and a "processing" fee of $1.25 per order are charged.

Passes are not required to simply enter the museum building, and if you are in a hurry there are a few exhibits that won't take much time. Youngsters under age 11, as well as adults, will hear a sample of the memorial's message in **"Remember the Children: Daniel's Story"** kids. It is the Holocaust from the perspective of a young boy growing up in Nazi Germany. About 30 minutes.

The **Permanent Exhibition** begins with an elevator ride to the fourth floor. There the Holocaust story unfolds chronologically with the rise of Nazi Germany, illustrated with grainy film clips of Adolph Hitler exhorting thronged supporters and of massed, goose-stepping troops on parade. It ends, two floors below, with the Allied liberation of the death camps. You will step into a railroad box car used to transport Jews under inhumane conditions to killing centers; imagine their fear. You will see prayer shawls, umbrellas, piles of shoes and artificial limbs confiscated by the Nazis. Perhaps most horrifying, you will view a scale-model re-creation of the killing process at a death camp, where the assembled victims had no idea of their approaching fate. Here and there are spirit-boosting exhibits, such as the small vessel on display, along with its sister ships, that helped smuggle nearly all of Denmark's Jews to safety in neutral Sweden. Ultimately, the memorial is a reminder, as the museum suggests, of our "responsibilities as citizens of a democracy" to never acquiesce to another holocaust.

LIVING THEATER A shot rang out in the theater, and the President slumped in his seat, mortally wounded. Stunned, the audience witnessed the assailant leap from the presidential box onto the stage. Injured, he stumbled away to the alley and fled on horseback. Ford's Theatre and the presidential box where President Abraham Lincoln was fatally wounded on the night of April 14, 1865 have been preserved as **Ford's Theatre National Historic Site** (511 10th St. NW, 3 blocks north of the Mall; ☎ 202/426-6924; Metro: Metro Center or Federal Triangle; www.nps.gov/foth; free admission; daily 9am–5pm except Dec 25). The most evocative way to see the theater is to attend a matinee or evening performance. Ford's continues to put on a full schedule of plays and musicals featuring locally based as well as nationally known actors, designers, and directors (p. 246). The red-brick Victorian building has been restored inside and out to look as it did on the night of the assassination. Like patrons that evening, you will sit on hard-backed chairs, though they now sport cushions. Above on the right is the box where Lincoln and his wife Mary Todd Lincoln sat with two guests watching "Our American Cousin," a comedy. The box is furnished with reproductions except for the red damask sofa where one of the guests, Major Henry Reed Rathbone, was sitting; he was stabbed in the left arm. The engraving of Washington hanging on the front of the box also is original. I challenge you to make it through the performance without glancing up at the box again and again, wondering, "What if...?"

If you can't see a show, Ford's still makes a short (30-min.) but illuminating stop on your sightseeing itinerary. The theater's basement is a museum detailing

the assassination, the subsequent hunt for actor John Wilkes Booth who fired the shot, his death at the hands of his pursuers, and the trial of alleged fellow conspirators. You see such historic items as Lincoln's overcoat, the dagger Booth used to stab Rathbone and Booth's left boot and spur. Entangled in the decorations of the presidential box, Booth broke a small bone in his left leg in the jump. Dr. Samuel Mudd cut the boot from Booth's foot when he sought Mudd's medical help during his flight. You can peek into the theater and the fatal box if a rehearsal or performance is not underway.

The assassination story continues just across the street at the Petersen House, 516 10th St. NW, **The House Where Lincoln Died,** a four-story red-brick home. Lincoln received immediate medical attention from a young doctor in the theater audience, and then he was carried unconscious to the home of William Petersen, a tailor. Visitors are shunted through the Front Parlor, where Mary Todd Lincoln waited out the night; the Back Parlor, where Secretary of War Edwin Stanton began the initial investigation of the crime; and the Back Bedroom, where Lincoln died at 7:22am on April 15. Furnishings are not original, but they are of the period.

PANDA-MONIUM The irresistibly cute family of Giant Pandas—mama Mei Xian, papa Tian Tian, and their male cub Tai Shan, born July 9, 2005—are the star residents of the Smithsonian Institution's **National Zoological Park** (3001 Connecticut Ave. NW; ☎ 202/633-4800; Metro: Woodley Park-Zoo and 3-block walk north; www.nationalzoo.org; free admission; Apr–Oct daily 10am–6pm, Nov–Mar 10am–4pm except Dec 25, grounds open at 6am year-round). It looked like the family might be broken up, as the zoo had an agreement with China that the baby be returned to China for future breeding when he turned 2. But a summit meeting in spring of 2007 resulted in an extension of his "visa," so Tai Shan will stay in Washington through 2009. His parents are expected to be at the zoo through 2010. (They're here on a 10-year loan from China.)

Tai Shan's (tie-SHON) birth—he arrived no larger than a stick of butter—was deemed a welcome success after the zoo's previous pair of pandas failed to produce any surviving offspring after years of zoo coaching. He was the zoo's first surviving panda cub and only the fourth one born in the United States. With Mei Xian (may-SHONG) and Tian Tian (t-YEN t-YEN), zoo scientists adopted a different and novel strategy to initiate conception: they used a single artificial insemination specifically timed when Mei Xiang was at peak fertility during the panda's brief 3-day-a-year breeding period. As I write this, Mei Xian's now expecting a second cub, so there might be a precious newcomer for you to view when you get to the zoo. The zoo pays China $1 million a year to exhibit Mei Xian and Tian Tian, and the birth of their cub required an additional one-time payment of $600,000. The money goes for preservation of the endangered species in China. The zoo maintains the largest reproductive science department of any zoo in the world. I am always heartened to read about its efforts to preserve endangered species.

You'll find the pandas, sloth bears, and other animals native to Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Bhutan Nepal, and China in the spiffy new (and greatly enlarged) **Asian Trail** at the zoo's entrance. (It's part of a $53 million overhaul of the upper end of the zoo.)

On Hiatus

Some of Washington's top sights are currently closed, but I include them here in the hope that they'll have reopened by the time you read this book.

For 2 decades, the original Star-Spangled Banner, the giant flag that flew over Baltimore's Fort McHenry in 1814 while bombs burst in the air, was the first thing visitors spotted on entering the Smithsonian Institution's **National Museum of American History** (On the Mall at Madison Dr. between 12th and 14th sts. NW; ☎ 202/633-1000; Metro: Smithsonian/Federal Triangle; www.americanhistory.si.edu). But the flag deteriorated badly, and from 1999 until 2006, it underwent extensive and meticulous restoration. With that project successfully completed, the Smithsonian announced in 2006 that it was shutting down the place, the largest history museum in the country, while the full museum is rehabilitated at a cost of $85 million. A reopening date is set for the summer of 2008. The centerpiece for the architecturally transformed interior will be a new and dramatic setting to display the banner.

Until the reopening, some of the museum's most popular items will be shown in a "Treasures of American History" exhibit at the Smithsonian's National Air and Space Museum. They include Dorothy's ruby slippers from *The Wizard of Oz,* Kermit the Frog, and "Star Wars" droids.

Over the years, visitors have also flocked to the **Federal Bureau of Investigation** (J. Edgar Hoover FBI Building, 935 Pennsylvania Ave. NW; ☎ 202/324-3447; Metro: Federal Triangle and Archives-Navy Memorial stations; www.fbi.gov/aboutus/tour/tour.htm; free admission; no current tours) to view the legendary fingerprint files, watch agents in target practice, see mementos of big arrests, and hear tales of agent derring-do is also currently closed to visitors. But for many months, the tours have been discontinued "until further notice." As I write this, the FBI website (see above) says the closure is because the exhibits are "undergoing extensive renovation." A sign outside the formidable J. Edgar Hoover Building, a contemporary urban fortress, says they will resume in 2007. But an FBI Community Services spokesman told me he doubted this date would be met, since funding for the renovation had been eliminated and all the exhibits dismantled.

Established in 1889, the zoo is one of the oldest in America. It is a huge place, a 163-acre urban park in an upscale residential neighborhood. Plan on spending at least half a day to take in the major exhibits. And, I can't stress this enough, wear comfortable walking shoes. You will cover at least 2 hilly miles and probably more.

Olmsted Walk is the zoo's main thoroughfare, which you follow mostly in a wide loop, downhill for a mile and then back up again. Youngsters will enjoy the **Kids' Farm**, a zoo of cows, donkeys, and goats in a 2-acre mock farm at the zoo's

farthest end. Before you set off, check in at the Visitor Center for special scheduled programs, such as panda interpretation, elephant bathing and training, seal and sea lion training, and octopus feeding.

THE SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION'S OTHER IMPORTANT MUSEUMS

You might think that the federal government in its wisdom decided decades ago that the nation needed a grand national museum. But that's not how Washington got the Smithsonian. America inherited it from the proverbial "rich uncle" nobody knew existed. The Smithsonian, as we know it now, grew from an odd bequest of more than $500,000 made to the United States in the will of James Smithson. An accomplished British scientist, he never visited this country and, as far as can be determined, never corresponded with anyone here. Why he made the gift, which the government received in 1838, remains a mystery. Perhaps he was protesting rigid British society, which discriminated against him throughout his life because of his illegitimate birth.

In his will, Smithson stipulated his legacy should be used to found "at Washington under the name of the Smithsonian Institution an establishment for the increase and diffusion of knowledge among men." Smithson died in Genoa, Italy in 1829 at age 64. When his burial site in a small English cemetery there was threatened, his remains were transferred to Washington for reburial. They were placed in a crypt in The Castle, the original Smithsonian building that now doubles as the Institution's administrative headquarters and visitor center. Exhibits at the crypt display his portrait, will, and scientific publications.

Today, the Institution is a museum and research complex of 20 museums (including the National Zoo, p. 114), two of which are located in New York City and one that is yet to be built on the Mall (the National Museum of African American History and Culture). Some resulted from bequests made by wealthy donors following Smithson's example. About 70% of the Institution's budget comes from the federal government ($621 million in 2006), and the rest from contributions and revenue from restaurants, gift and book shops, and theaters. The total number of objects in the Institution's many collections is estimated at more than 135 million—the bulk of them in the National Museum of Natural History. Don't fret if you can't get to all of them. You would have to live here for years to see everything. Entrance to all the museums is free. Most museums offer daily guided tours and a varied schedule of cultural performances; check the website, call, or visit the information desk for each.

You will note that the number of stars I've awarded to the Smithsonian museums ranges from two to zero. Why zero? Generally, the museums earning stars display notable permanent collections—you can count on them being on display when you show up; the ones without stars tend to focus on temporary shows, which don't stick around for more than a few weeks or months. Still, these shows can be major events worthy of your attention. So check the Smithsonian website to learn what's offered during your stay.

Because it opens before most Mall attractions, **The Smithsonian Institution Building/The Castle** (On the Mall at 1000 Jefferson Dr. SW; ☎ 202/633-1000; Metro: Smithsonian; www.smithsonian.org; free admission; daily 8:30am–5:30pm

except Dec 25) is the place to begin your morning. The building, built in 1855 of reddish sandstone, is a curiosity in itself. Sporting castle-like towers, it is regarded as one of the greatest examples of Gothic revival design in this country. As a sort of teaser to what's coming, The Castle displays samples from the Institution's vast collections. You might see beaded moccasins from the National Museum of the American Indian; hockey great Bobby Orr's much-battered hockey stick from the National Museum of American History, or the modernistic dining service used in flight on the Air France Concorde from the National Air and Space Museum. Behind The Castle, the **Enid A. Haupt Garden** is a 4-acre Victorian gem, open at 7am daily except Dec 25.

Two major museums sharing the same building showcase some of the best American art from the nation's origins to the present. They are the **National Portrait Gallery** ★★ and the **Smithsonian American Art Museum** ★★ (Eighth and F sts. NW, 6 blocks north of the Mall; ☎ 202/633-1000; Metro: Metro Center/Gallery Place-Chinatown; www.reynoldscenter.org; free admission; daily 11:30am–7pm except Dec 25). Note that these museums keep later hours than their colleagues on the Mall. If you go to only one art museum in Washington, I suggest making it this two-for-one pairing. The art is American, an apt subject for a visit to the nation's capital; it's young, iconoclastic art, reflecting the country's modest age; and it dwells in varied ways, positive and negative, on the American Dream. Together, the museums have been dubbed the Donald W. Reynolds Center for American Art and Portraiture, named for a donor, but nobody will call them that. If you haven't heard of either, it is because both were shut down from Jan 1, 2000 to July 1, 2006 for a complete $298 million renovation of the historic building that houses them.

The **National Portrait Gallery** celebrates America's achievers in paintings, photography, and sculpture. Works include the nation's only complete collection of presidential portraits outside the White House. They will be on display permanently in an exhibit called America's Presidents. The major attraction is Gilbert Stuart's **"Lansdowne"** portrait of George Washington, generally regarded as the most famous of all Washington paintings—and Stuart's masterpiece. It was commissioned in 1796, the President's final year in office, by a wealthy Philadelphia merchant. He presented it to the Marquis of Lansdowne of Great Britain, who had supported American Independence. For three decades, Lansdowne's heirs loaned it to the Smithsonian for display. But in 2001 they threatened to put it up for auction. Thanks to a $30 million donation from the Donald W. Reynolds Foundation, the Portrait Gallery was able to purchase it prior to the auction. **Twentieth-Century Americans** is another permanent exhibit, featuring Andy Warhol's silk-screen take of Michael Jackson.

The **American Art Museum** features a survey of the country's best from the colonial era to the present. Among its strengths is the world's greatest collection of paintings of Native Americans made by George Catlin in the 1830s. You also will see art of "The American Colonies," "The Gilded Age," and "The Civil War." One new and contemporary work, a real mind-boggler, is Nam June Paik's **Electronic Superhighway: Continental U.S., Alaska, Hawaii (1995),** a giant neon map that outlines all 50 states and the District of Columbia. Within the boundaries of each state is a video screen, each presenting a different mini-show. You truly have to see it to believe it. If art isn't your thing, pop in anyway to see this dazzler.

Out of the past is a dazzler of a different sort. It is Albert Bierstadt's 10-foot-wide canvas **"Among the Sierra Nevada, California."** No, it isn't the real Sierra—Bierstadt painted it in London using the Swiss Alps as a model—but it does capture the majesty of the mountain range. It hangs in a room to itself, displayed as it might have been when it made a grand tour of Europe and the United States in the late 1860s.

Only part of the Smithsonian's vast collection can be displayed in the galleries. The rest hang in the **Luce Foundation Center,** three floors of glassed-in storage space open for public viewing. A second new feature is the **Lunder Conservation Center,** five laboratories and studios set behind floor-to-ceiling glass. Visitors can watch conservators at work cleaning paintings, refurbishing frames, and preserving fraying paper. No other American museum provides this opportunity.

The museums are housed in the former Patent Office, a Greek revival beauty—a work of art itself—based on the Parthenon. One of Washington's oldest public buildings, it dates back to 1836. Because of its initial purpose, it was quickly dubbed "the temple of invention."

A splashing stream, grass-ringed ponds, simulated meadowlands, and woods encircle the Smithsonian's newest museum. They represent the landscape inhabited by the country's Native Americans, past and present. Their often sad, but compelling story is told somewhat provocatively at the **National Museum of the American Indian** ★ kids (On the Mall at Jefferson Dr. and 4th St. SW; ☎ 202/633-1000; Metro: Federal Center/L'Enfant Plaza; www.americanindian.si.edu; free admission; daily 10am–5:30pm except Dec 25).

Stop first at the **Window on Collections.** It's probably what most visitors expect to see when they step inside. A large and colorful sampling of the museum's rich collection of Native American art and cultural objects—beadwork, dolls, arrowheads—it's the largest and most diverse in the world. But the soul of the museum really is **Our Universes, Our Peoples and Our Lives** in which 24 tribes describe their lives today, usually displaying everyday objects rather than crafts as illustration. The Saint-Laurent Metis, who live on the southeast shore of Canada's Lake Manitoba (near Winnepeg), focus for example on their unusual livelihood as commercial ice fishermen. To help visitors understand, their exhibit features a Lake Manitoba bombardier, a near tank-size vehicle on tracks that helps them navigate the ice. Don't miss the **Wall of Gold,** a wall hung with more than 400 gold objects, including masks. The **Chesapeake Museum Store** displays handmade Southwestern pottery and other handicrafts, much of it of top-notch quality and extremely expensive. Even if you don't buy, admire the craftsmanship of tribal artisans. Do plan on lunch at the **Mitsitam Native Foods Café,** as much of a cultural experience as the museum and the best eating option on the mall (see p. 56 for a full review).

Bedazzled or perplexed? You may find yourself in one of these categories, or maybe both, when you step into the always stimulating **Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden** ★ (On the Mall at Jefferson Dr. and 7th St. SW; ☎ 202/633-1000; Metro: L'Enfant Plaza; www.hirshhorn.si.edu; free admission; 10am–5:30pm daily except Dec 25). It's the Smithsonian's museum of modern and contemporary art—much of it bold, thoughtful, and gorgeous; some of it puzzling, somber, and downbeat. The collection, housed in a giant hollow cylinder of a building wrapped around a fountain courtyard (so very contemporary)—it looks like a

giant doughnut with feet—has grown from a nucleus of 12,000 works donated by American art collector Joseph H. Hirshhorn. It presents what the Smithsonian says is "a capsule history of modern art" from the beginning of the 20th century to the present. Early modernists, such as Fernand Leger and Constantine Brancusi, are followed chronologically by the organic landscapes of Georgia O'Keeffe, who in turn gives way to pop art. You will see works by Pablo Picasso, Piet Modrian, Joan Miro, Max Ernst, William de Kooning (2 full galleries), and Edward Hopper. An entire gallery of small mobiles by Alexander Calder is a visual delight. Pop art is represented in part by a Claes Oldenburg textile sculpture of a 7-Up sign.

Yet another wealthy collector donated more artworks of such value that they rate a Smithsonian museum of their own. In this case, 1,000 masterpieces of Asian art form the core of the **Arthur M. Sackler Gallery** (On the Mall behind The Castle; ☎ 202/633-1000; Metro: Smithsonian; www.asia.si.edu; free admission; 10am–5pm daily except Dec 25). Actually, the museum is beneath the Mall, reached through an elaborately decorated pavilion of Asian design situated at ground level behind The Castle in the Haupt Garden. The Mall is getting crowded, and a subterranean site helped ease the congestion. Entering the pavilion, distinguished by its multiple-peaked roof, is a form of time travel back into an exotic fantasyland of ancient art and archeological riches. But first, the museum introduces you to a contemporary work, **Monkeys Grasping for the Moon,** created by expatriate Chinese artist Xu Bing expressly for the Sackler in 2001. You can't miss this one either. The sculpture, comprised of 21 laminated wood pieces, dangles like a chain from the sky-lit atrium to a reflecting pool two floors below. Each of the pieces forms the word "monkey" in one of a dozen languages. A Chinese fable (in which a group of monkeys, linking arms and tails, attempt to grasp the moon) is the basis for the work. The family of Madame Chiang Kai-shek, wife of the former Nationalist Chinese leader, presented the complex sculpture to the museum to commemorate her historic appearance before the Joint Session of Congress in 1943. Other museum highlights include ancient Iranian silver, illustrated Persian manuscripts, Chinese jades and lacquer work, carved Indian ivory, exquisite Japanese folding screens, and finely crafted Cambodian earthenware. These items are scattered about in small galleries; the major display areas generally are given over to temporary exhibits and visiting shows.

Raising the profile and importance of African art—the art of an entire continent—is a major goal of the **National Museum of African Art** (On the Mall behind The Castle; ☎ 202/633-1000; Metro: Smithsonian station; www.nmafa.si.edu; free admission; daily 10am–5pm except Dec 25). Like the Sackler Gallery, this museum also is located beneath the Mall, reached by a second pavilion—this one with a series of roof-top domes. Ancient carved masks, sculptures, beautifully patterned textiles, bead work, and utilitarian objects form much of the collection, but contemporary works reveal the continuing quality of African art and crafts. Among its prizes is an early 20th century carved-wood throne of the Luguru peoples of Tanzania. Shaped in the form of a woman, the chair's back is topped by a head containing small scarification nodes. Often chairs like this in East Africa came in male/female pairs and were used by chiefs and other dignitaries.

The chair is a major artifact in the museum's sole permanent exhibit, **Art of the Personal,** which, as the museum explains, "celebrates the creativity of African artists who have made personal objects of great beauty." Especially intriguing are

the many hand-carved head rests—miniature wood tables standing 6 to 8 inches high that serve as pillows. Elegantly shaped as rectangles, ovals, tripods, and more, they all look terribly uncomfortable. The exhibit also includes stools, pipes, snuff boxes, jewelry, and hair ornaments.

Thanks to a wealthy donor of varied passions a single museum houses one of the world's finest permanent collections of Asian art as well as the most comprehensive assemblage of the works of American artist James McNeill Whistler. This somewhat schizophrenic entity is the **Freer Gallery of Art** ★★ (On the Mall at Jefferson Dr. and 12th St. SW; ☎ 202/633-1000; Metro: Smithsonian; www.asia.si.edu; free admission; daily 10am–5:30pm except Dec 25). The founder, Detroit industrialist Charles Lang Freer, also funded the building, an Italian Renaissance-style beauty wrapped around a sculpture-filled Italianate courtyard. The Freer is connected by an underground passage to the Sackler, thus linking the Smithsonian's two big Asian collections. What is the difference between the Sackler and the Freer? The Sackler is mainly the showplace for visiting or temporary exhibits; the Freer displays only its permanent collection.

Start with Whistler because his works are more easily comprehended. The Freer holds hundreds of Whistler's pieces, many of them suggesting Chinese and Japanese influences. The museum's top attraction is the famed **Harmony in Blue and Gold: The Peacock Room,** breath-taking in its elegance and complexity. It is a complete room Whistler painted for English ship owner Frederick Leyland. Its name comes from the floor-to-ceiling paintings of blue and gold peacocks. Whistler covered every inch of the ceiling and walls, creating a unique setting where Leyland could show off his prized collection of blue and white porcelain vases and an accompanying Whistler painting, **Princess from the Land of Porcelain,** which hangs over the fireplace.

Whistler already was collecting Japanese and Chinese artworks when Freer met him, and he credits Whistler with encouraging him to collect it as well. Oddly, Freer simultaneously collected contemporary American art, including Whistler, and ancient Asian art. When he bequeathed his collection to the Smithsonian, he stipulated that no more American pieces be added, but the Asian collection could grow.

Of all the many Asian works displayed, the most dramatic are the Japanese screens in **Gallery 5.** Don't miss them. Using screens as a canvas was seen by Japanese artists as a way to encourage an intimate relationship between the viewer and the work of art. Especially lovely is **Landscapes of the Four Seasons** (18th–19th century), a pair of screens each with six folds. Winter is depicted on the left in a frozen snowscape, but then the countryside comes into blossom as the seasons progress across the other folds.

Outrageous, comical, or simply elegant describe the best of modern American handmade crafts from the 20th and 21st centuries exhibited in the **Renwick Gallery** ★ (1661 Pennsylvania Ave. NW at 17th St.; ☎ 202/633-1000; Metro: Farragut West; www.americanart.si.edu/renwick; free admission; daily 10am–5:30pm except Dec 25). Though the artworks are exquisitely crafted, many are offbeat, which makes for entertaining viewing. A small space, you can do it justice in 30 minutes. A popular work is *Game Fish, 1988* by Larry Fuente, a fantasy sculpture depicting a giant sailfish flamboyantly bedecked in colorful buttons, beads, coins, and even a Superman doll. Another fine work is *Ghost Clock* by

Wendell Castle, a grandfather clock draped in the delicate folds of a carved white shroud. Though not part of the crafts collection, the upstairs Grand Salon, a lavish and spacious Victorian room from the Civil War-era, merits a peek. On its walls hang two giant landscapes by Thomas Moran, *The Chasm of the Colorado* and *The Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone.* A branch of the American Art Museum (see above), the Renwick collections are housed in a French Second Empire-style building that was Washington's first art gallery.

"Uh, oh," you think, "the history of mail sure sounds pretty dry to me." Not at all. The **National Postal Museum** ★ kids (On Capitol Hill at Massachusetts Ave. and 1st St. NE; ☎ 202/633-1000; Metro: Union Station; www.postalmuseum.si.edu; free admission; daily 10am–5:30pm except Dec 25) tells exciting tales, sure to earn a youngster's rapt attention. In America's early years, delivering the mail in fair weather and foul often proved a life-threatening adventure. Learn about the challenge of posting a letter in pre-Revolutionary America, a near-roadless wilderness; ride with the Pony Express across the vast and lonely Great Plains; witness (via video) the now bygone skill of mail car clerks who tossed and snatched up mail bags from a fast moving train. Stamp collectors will want a look at the "Rarities Vault," which features two new exhibits each year. Appropriately, the museum occupies the Old City Post Office Building, a classic Beaux Arts-style structure that complements neighboring Union Station.

WASHINGTON'S WORLD CLASS ART MUSEUMS

In the nation's capital, you shouldn't be surprised to find a second major museum spotlighting American art, both historic and contemporary. This one, independent of the Smithsonian's American Art Museum, is the **Corcoran Gallery of Art** ★ (500 17th St. NW, 1 block from the White House; ☎ 202/639-1700; Metro: Farragut West; www.corcoran.org; $8 adults, $6 military/seniors 65-plus, $4 students; Wed–Sun 10am–5pm, Thurs 10am–9pm, open on holiday Mon, closed Thanksgiving, Dec 25, and Jan 1). Founder William Wilson Corcoran collected the works of his day, bequeathing the city one of the world's finest arrays of 19th-century art. Following his precedent, the museum has been intent on assembling works of contemporary artists; that is, works of **our** day, and in particular artists in the Washington area. Much of the museum's collection is displayed in temporary shows, which is how the museum keeps local art buffs returning.

Of historical note—yes, some of the old stuff is hauled out, too—is Albert Bierstadt's **Last of the Buffalo** (1888), an idealized look at a time when bison in the American West were plentiful. This was the last of the artist's important panoramic paintings of the West. I'm fond of this museum because its manageable size doesn't overwhelm or exhaust. The building itself is a splendid example of the Beaux-Arts style, especially the soaring interior atrium galleries and rotunda.

French Impressionist Pierre-Auguste Renoir's **Luncheon of the Boating Party** ranks among the world's most popular masterworks of painting. Its home is **The Phillips Collection** ★★ (1600 21st St. NW; ☎ 202/387-2151; Metro: Dupont Circle; www.phillipscollection.org; donation suggested weekdays, varied weekend fee in range of $12 adults, $10 students/seniors 62-plus, under 18 free; Tues–Sat 10am–5pm, Thurs 10am–8:30pm; Sun 12–7pm except June–Sept Sun 12–5pm, closed all federal holidays). Opened in 1921, the Phillips is considered America's first museum of modern art. Duncan Phillips, a steel and banking heir from Philadelphia,

founded the museum in his home. He bought **Boating Party** in 1923, considering it "one of the greatest paintings in the world." Completed in 1880, it pictures a group of 14 Parisians at lunch on the balcony of a restaurant on the Seine near Paris. Along with the light-hearted and festive **Boating Party,** the small, intimate museum, full of odd nooks and corners, displays other Impressionists works by van Gogh, Degas, and Cezanne. They are a must-see for art lovers. The museum opened a new addition in 2006, greatly increasing it gallery space. Here you find the new **Rothko Room.** It's a rectangle designed to the exact specifications that artist Mark Rothko and Phillips concluded in 1960 was needed to best display four of Rothko's bold blocks of color. Gallery talks are held Thursday at 6 and 7pm. Classical concerts Sunday at 5pm in the Music Room feature emerging artists and have been a museum tradition for 60 years. Talks and concerts are included in the admission fee.

Are the masterworks of art a solely male contribution to our culture? Not hardly is the message delivered by the **National Museum of Women in the Arts** ★ (1250 New York Ave. NW; ☎ 202/783-5000; Metro: Metro Center; www.nmwa.org; $8 adults, $6 students/seniors (60 plus), under 18 free; Mon–Sat 10am–5pm, Sun 11am–5pm, closed Thanksgiving, Dec 25, and Jan 1). The museum's growing collection now numbers more than 3,000 artworks, representing a broad survey of women artists from the 16th century to the present. They include works by such contemporary painters as Georgia O'Keeffe (**Alligator Pears in a Basket,** 1921) and Frida Kahlo (**Self Portrait Dedicated to Leon Trotsky,** 1937). This is an engaging museum that assembles intriguing (but temporary) special exhibits. A recent example was "Divine and Human," a study through 400 sculptures, textiles, pottery, and jewelry of the role of women in the ancient Mayan, Aztec, and Incan civilizations of Mexico and Peru. Visitors of both sexes should find the juxtaposition of so many thoughtful visual expressions stimulating.

MUSEUMS AND ATTRACTIONS FOR VISITORS WITH SPECIALIZED INTERESTS

ANTIQUES

DAUGHTERS OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION (DAR) MUSEUM (1776 D St. NW; ☎ 202/628-1776; Metro: Farragut West; www.dar.org/museum; free admission; Mon–Fri 9:30am–4pm, Sat 9am–5pm except federal holidays and 2 weeks in July) boasts a collection of 30,000 decorative and fine arts objects made or used in America prior to the Industrial Revolution. They are displayed in two galleries and 31 period rooms that include an 18th-century Georgian tavern and a 19th-century Tennessee parlor. If antiques are your thing, put this museum on your must-see list. Guided tours are offered on the hour and half-hour from 10am–2:30pm weekdays and 9am–4:30pm Saturday.

The skilled craftsmanship of early America's finest artisans is spotlighted in the eighth floor **Diplomatic Reception Rooms** ★ (23rd Street between C and D sts. NW; ☎ 202/647-3241; Metro: Foggy Bottom-GWU; http://receptiontours.state.gov; free admission; Mon–Fri except federal holidays) at the U.S. State Department. The elegant collection of antiques, including silver by Paul Revere and Chippendale furniture from Philadelphia, literally furnishes the setting for some of the country's most important diplomatic meetings. Reservations for a 45-minute

escorted tour of the rooms are required at least 90 days in advance. They can be made at the website (see above) or through your representative or senators. Tours are scheduled for 9:30am, 10:30am, and 2:45pm. Children younger than 12 not admitted.

ARCHITECTURE

The art of building design, highlighting prominent architects and their work, is the focus of the **National Building Museum** (401 F St. NW; ☎ 800/222-7270 or 202/272-2448; Metro: Judiciary Square; www.nbm.org; $5 suggested donation; Mon–Sat 10am–5pm, Sun 11am–5pm, closed Thanksgiving, Dec 25, and Jan 1). The only museum of its kind in the country, its exhibits (generally temporary) tackle such topical issues as managing suburban growth, preserving landmarks, and revitalizing urban centers. One long-term display zeros in on seldom-seen architectural details—for example, the tops of skyscrapers high above a viewer's eye. Another examines how the monument-filled city of Washington grew from swampy land on the Potomac River. The museum building, constructed in 1887 in Italian Renaissance style for the U.S. Pension Bureau, is itself a red-brick fantasy that often is used for gala events such as inaugural balls and campaign fundraisers. So you're not an architectural buff? Make the short side trip from the Mall just to see the ornate **Great Hall,** almost the size of a football field. Eight massive columns rising 75 feet from the floor of the hall are among the tallest interior columns in the world. Building tours are scheduled 12:30pm Monday to Wednesday; 11:30am Thursday to Saturday; and at 12:30 and 1:30pm Sunday. Free walk-in family programs are held at 2:30pm Saturday and Sunday.

ESPIONAGE

True or not, it has been claimed that more spies prowl Washington's streets than any other city in the world. Take a look at their secret life at the **International Spy Museum** kids (800 F St. NW, 4 blocks north of the Mall; ☎ 866/spymuseum or 202/393-7798; Metro: Gallery Place-Chinatown; www.spymuseum.org; $15 adults 12–64, $12 children 5–11, $14 seniors, military, and spies; Apr–Oct 10am–8pm, Nov–Mar 10am–6pm, closed Thanksgiving, Dec 25, and Jan 1). When the museum opened, I figured it would be a tourist trap. But when I visited (anonymously) I came away convinced that the museum does a very good job covering its subject. And it does it with intriguing interactive games and surprises that are entertaining and fun. At the outset, you assume a spy's identity and then learn the tricks of your trade. Kids love the idea of becoming a secret agent. You will see lots of spy gizmos, meet famous spies via video, and watch a James Bond-type getaway car fully equipped with defensive devices. Look out; its innocent looking hubcaps suddenly erupt with flashing blades. Plan to spend a minimum of 1 hour. Summer lines can get long, so consider purchasing timed tickets in advance from Ticketmaster, ☎ 800/551-7328; www.ticketmaster.com.

IMPRESSIONIST ART

David and Carmen Kreeger collected art, especially Impressionist works, with eager enthusiasm and a whole lot of money. And they displayed them in their home, a post-modern architectural jewel designed by Philip Johnson to show off the 200-work collection. Today the house and the collection form the intimate

Kreeger Museum (2401 Foxhall Rd. NW; ☎ 202/338-3552; D6 bus from P and 22nd sts. NW to Foxhall and Reservoir roads NW with half-mile walk; www.kreegermuseum.org; $8 adults, $5 students and seniors 65 plus; tours Tues–Fri 10:30am and 1:30pm by appointment, self-guided tours Sat 10am–4pm without appointment). Impressionist works include paintings by Monet (nine, including the lovely **Meadows at Giverney,** 1884), Renoir, Sisley, and Pissarro. Four Picassos, highlighted by the vibrant and bold **Man with Golden Helmet** (1969), hang in the library. Washington's notable Color Field school is represented by an abstract construction from Sam Gilliam and the multicolored and wavy stripes of Gene Davis. Despite its many virtues, the museum should be considered a **lagniappe,** something a little extra (and worthy) for art lovers with time to spare—especially with such a surfeit of art elsewhere in the city. Children under 12 are discouraged from the weekday tours, which last about 90 minutes. You can get there by bus but spring for a taxi to avoid the long walk. The museum is a 5-minute taxi ride from Georgetown; 12 minutes from Dupont Circle.

JOURNALISM

The world's first interactive museum of news—the press in all its variations—is scheduled to reopen in new quarters in downtown Washington in the fall of 2007. Check on construction progress of the **Newseum** (☎ 888/639-7386; www.newseum.org). During construction, the museum acquired as an exhibit the first news satellite truck, an important artifact of broadcast history. Because of its size, it wouldn't have fitted through even the largest doorway after construction. So it was put in place immediately, and the museum is being built up around it. Other highlights include a gallery outlining 500 years of recorded news, displays of TV news feeds from around the world, the day's front page of 80 newspapers, and a tribute to journalists killed on the job.

LATIN AMERICAN ART

Art Museum of the Americas (At 18th St. and Constitution Ave. NW; ☎ 202/458-6016; Metro: Farragut West; www.oas.org; free admission; Tues–Sun 10am–5pm except federal holidays) is a part of the Organization of American States, a small art museum featuring works of the finest contemporary artists from OAS member countries. Exhibition space is tight, so the works on display, either from the permanent collection or in special shows, change frequently. Mostly, though, they are bold and colorful and well worth a quick look.

MARITIME HISTORY

America's big debt to its Armed Forces, but in this case the U.S. Navy, is the theme of the **Navy Museum** ★★ kids (Washington Navy Yard, 9th and M sts. SE; ☎ 202/433-4882; Metro: Eastern Market, connecting to [N22] bus to the entrance gate; www.history.navy.mil; free admission, but phone reservations required 24 hours in advance; Mon–Fri 9am–5pm, weekends and holidays 10am–5pm, closed Thanksgiving, Dec 25, and Jan 1). The Navy puts on a grand show that should please fans of military history (and their families, too). The Navy Yard itself is a historical site; the service's oldest shore establishment, it dates to 1799. The sprawling exhibit hall covers Navy history from the Revolutionary War to the present with plenty of military hardware, including a massive World

War II anti-aircraft gun, a submarine chamber with operating periscope (the kids will want to take a look), and a Navy fighter plane suspended from the ceiling. The Navy destroyer Barry is moored outside the museum on the Anacostia River. You are welcome to go aboard. If you plan a weekend visit, phone for reservations by noon on Friday.

SCIENCE

Science research plays a role in public policy decisions. This is the message of the small, high-tech **Marion Koshland Science Museum of the National Academy of Sciences** (6th and E sts. NW, 3 blocks north of the Mall; ☎ 202/334-1201 or 888/567-4526; Metro: Judiciary Square; www.koshland-science-museum.org; $5 adults, $3 students/military/seniors 65-plus; daily 10am–6pm except Tues, closed Thanksgiving, Dec 25, and Jan 1). Interactive exhibits tackle such issues as global warming, use of DNA in criminal investigations, and tracking the origins of SARS (a quickly contained epidemic threat). Be prepared to concentrate; this is serious stuff, seriously presented. You can't just breeze through and expect to make any sense out of what you see. Children under 13 not admitted.

SHAKESPEARE

English majors take note. The world's largest and finest collection of Shakespeare's printed works is maintained and displayed (some of it, anyway) at the **Folger Shakespeare Library** ★ (201 East Capitol St. SE; ☎ 202/544-4600; Metro: Capitol South; www.folger.edu; free admission; Mon–Sat 10am–4pm, closed all federal holidays). Curators delve into the literary riches 2 or 3 times a year to stage major exhibitions in the **Great Hall,** itself a paneled gem reminiscent of Elizabethan England. But always on display is a **First Folio of Shakespeare,** the first collected edition of his works. Put together after his death in 1616 by a pair of fellow actors, the First Folio is the only source of 18 plays, including **Macbeth, Julius Caesar,** and **The Tempest.** A computer program called **"Turning the Page"** allows you to examine a few pages of its **Romeo and Juliet.** Another rarity that attracts lots of attention when it is displayed is Queen Elizabeth's "gift roll" of 1585, a list of Christmas gifts she gave and received that year. Both she and her courtiers proved rather generous. On your way out, take a peek inside the adjacent **Elizabethan Theatre.** With its half-timbered facade, it suggests the courtyard of an inn, which might have served as a playhouse for a traveling group of actors. A regular season of plays is presented here. Outside, visit the **Elizabethan Garden** on the museum's east end and the fountain topped by a statue of **Puck** on the west side.

TEXTILES

Preserving and displaying rare handmade fabrics, including ancient apparel, from around the world is the mission of the small but renowned **Textile Museum** (2320 S St. NW; ☎ 202/667-0441; Metro: Dupont Circle; www.textilemuseum.org; $5 suggested donation; Mon–Sat 10am–5pm, Sun 1–5pm, closed federal holidays and Dec 24). The museum claims to be one of the world's foremost specialized art museums. A bold claim, but in fact its exhibits are exquisite. See an 18th-century Chinese "Dragon Coat" of meticulously embroidered silk; a 13th-century striped tunic from Peru; a dashing red scarf from 20th-century Bali; Oriental rugs, Japanese kimonos, tapestries, banners, colorful burial wraps, and more. Housing

17,000 objects, the museum occupies a pair of adjoining mansions dating to the early 1900s. They are representative of the museum's fashionable Kalorama neighborhood, located just off Embassy Row. Take a walk through the formal gardens in the rear.

TRAVEL

Circle the globe by means of the photographic art and explorer finds at the **National Geographic Museum at Explorer's Hall** kids (1145 17th St. NW; ☎ 202/857-7588; Metro: Farragut North; www.nationalgeographic.com; free admission; Mon–Sat and holidays 9am–5pm, Sun 10am–5pm, closed Dec 25). Frequently changing exhibits spotlight past and current expeditions, adventures, and scientific research sponsored by the National Geographic Society. Many are enhanced by the estimable work of photographers at the society's publications. Society member or not, drop by for a quick look at still hidden corners of the world. Actually, I take a look regularly. Although the exhibition space is modest, the shows often mirror today's headlines—something the big Smithsonian museums on the Mall can't do so easily.

FIVE MORE MEMORIALS YOU'LL WANT TO SEE

Hard to believe, but almost in the city's heart is a 91-acre near-wilderness where you can escape from urban hubbub—Theodore Roosevelt Island in the Potomac River. This peaceful retreat is the site of the **Theodore Roosevelt Memorial** kids (On the Potomac River at the Virginia end of the Theodore Roosevelt Memorial Bridge; ☎ 703/289-2500; Metro: Rosslyn and a 20-minute walk; www.nps.gov/this; free admission; dawn–dusk daily). Preserving forest, marsh, and swamp, the island was dedicated in 1967 to America's 26th president as a memorial recognizing his love of nature. Two and a half miles of island trails invite easy hikes. In the center, a 17-foot-high statue of Roosevelt soars to tree-top height. He is dressed in frock coat, his right hand raised in a vigorous gesture representative of his famous enthusiasm. Four large stones are inscribed with his comments on nature, mankind, youth, and government. To read more about the Park, see p. 164 in Chapter 7.

As the embodiment of the U.S. Navy bluejacket—past, present, and future—the 7-foot-tall statue called "The Lone Sailor" is the focal point of the **U.S. Navy Memorial** (Pennsylvania Ave. between 7th and 9th sts. NW; ☎ 202/737-2300; Metro: Archives-Navy Memorial; www.lonesailor.org; free admission; always on view). The memorial's founders envisioned the sailor, a heavy duffle bag at his side, as a 25-year-old, a senior second-class petty officer "fast becoming a seasoned veteran." He is posed as if waiting to board ship. At his feet, a huge world map is inlaid in granite. Bas reliefs on an amphitheater wall highlight various Navy units, such as the Seabees, and the contribution of Navy families at home. The bronze for the statue was mixed with metal artifacts taken from eight Navy vessels representing more than 200 years of naval history. Art critics have given thumbs down to the memorial as unimaginative, as compared to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial and the soaring steel spires of the National Air Force Memorial. I disagree; the Lone Sailor, boldly confronting an uncertain future, has a very personal impact. He could be you, or your son or husband or close friend. Immediately behind the outdoor memorial, the **Navy Heritage Center** (free admission;

Mon–Sat 9:30am–5pm, except closed Nov–Feb Mon and most Federal holidays) features a small, limited museum called the Gallery Deck and the Ship's Store, selling nautical merchandise. Click on "Plan of the Day" on the website (see above) for the schedule of concerts and other events. Unless you come from a Navy background, you can skip the center. The real memorial, the one that inspires, is the sailor in his white hat.

At the end of the Civil War in 1865, the Grand Review of Troops marched down Pennsylvania Avenue in Washington. Not invited to participate were 156 African-American units who also fought for the victorious Union cause. In 1998, they received belated recognition with the installation of the **African-American Civil War Memorial** (Vermont Ave. and U St. NW; ☎ 202/667-2667; Metro: U Street–African American Civil War Memorial-Cardozo; www.afroamcivilwar.org; free admission; always on view). A bronze statue called **"Spirit of Freedom,"** centered in a granite-paved plaza, depicts uniformed black soldiers and a sailor, armed and alert. Behind them, the "**Wall of Honor**" lists the names of 209,145 members of the United States Colored Troops (USCT), which includes 7,000 white officers. Two blocks west of the memorial, the **African-American Civil War Memorial Museum** (1200 U St. NW; free admission; Mon–Fri 10am–5pm, Sat 10am–2pm) houses a modest collection of photographs and documents chronicling the African-American role in the Civil War. U Street, location of both memorial and museum, was once known as Washington's "Black Broadway." Undergoing revitalization, it's emerging again as one of the city's hot dining, shopping, and entertainment areas. Before you hoist a beer at one of the street's trendy bars, detour a block or two to ponder the memorial.

Two tree-lined "pathways of remembrance" border blue-gray marble walls. Inscribed on the walls are the names of more than 16,500 of America's federal, state, and local law enforcement officers who have been killed in the line of duty since just after the Revolutionary War in 1792. The walls, set in a three-acre park called Judiciary Square, form the **National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial** (E St. between 4th and 5th sts. NW; ☎ 202/737-3400; Metro: Judiciary Square; www.nleomf.com; free admission; always on view). At the entrance of each pathway, the bronze sculpture of a lion and her cubs symbolizes "the protective role of our law officers." Approximately half of the officers listed on the walls were shot to death. Another 28% died in traffic-related accidents. Each year in May, new names of the fallen are dedicated in a huge **Candlelight Vigil** at the memorial. Currently exhibits at its **Memorial Visitor Center** (2 blocks east at 605 E St. NW; Mon–Fri 9am–5pm, Sat 10am–5pm, Sun noon–5pm, closed major holidays) explain the memorial's history and significance. A video kiosk allows you to call up the name and photograph (where available) of anyone whose name is inscribed on the walls.

As bold as it is graceful, the Washington area's newest memorial, the **National Air Force Memorial** (Southwest of the Pentagon; ☎ 703/247-5808; www.airforcememorial.org; Metro: Pentagon and half-mile walk; free admission; daily dawn–dusk) was dedicated on Oct 14, 2006. It pays tribute to the millions of men and women who have served in the U.S. Air Force and in its predecessor organizations—the Aeronautical Division of the U.S. Signal Corps; the Division of Military Aeronautics, Secretary of War; the Army Air Service; the Army Air Corps and the Army Air Forces. The Air Force, which has suffered more than 53,000

Democracy Tree

Maybe Washington's least known monument—though it shouldn't be—is the Democracy Tree. A 25-foot-tall shady elm, it stands at 21st Street and New Hampshire Avenue NW, a few blocks north of the White House. Look for it curbside ringed by a small fence. A bronze plaque placed at the tree's foot in 2001 protests Washington's lack of a voting senator or representative in the U.S. Congress. Sponsored by the Foundry United Methodist Church, it is an anguished appeal for redress:

"This tree is dedicated to the more than half million veterans, taxpayers, and citizens of the District of Columbia who, despite fighting in foreign wars, paying their full measure of taxes, and faithfully serving their country, continue to have no voting representation in the Congress of the United States of America. Taxation without Representation is Tyranny."

Most anyone who calls Washington home agrees. I do.

combat casualties in the country's wars, was the only branch of military service without a memorial in the Washington area. The memorial features three stainless steel spires that soar skyward 270 feet. In an interview with the **Washington Post,** architect James Ingo Freed said his inspiration came when he saw TV footage of Air Force jets performing their bomb-burst formation. Several planes shoot skyward in unison and then peel off, creating high-rising vapor trails that curl at the top. While honoring the sacrifice of American Air Force men and women, the memorial also was conceived as a tribute to America's formidable air power. The site, a promontory called the Naval Annex, enjoys a grand and unobstructed view of Washington and its monuments.

HISTORIC HOUSES AND THE FASCINATING FOLKS WHO LIVED IN THEM

Washington has been home to many people who have played an important role in shaping the nation. Their homes, now open as museums, serve as a memorial to their accomplishments—and, often, to their idiosyncrasies. A few houses also exhibit important decorative arts collections. Each should provide a refreshing break from the museum crowds on the Mall. They are quiet and uncrowded, and several display lovely gardens. Note that descriptions of **Dumbarton House, Dumbarton Oaks Mansion and Garden, Old Stone House, Tudor Place,** and **Anderson House** can be found in Chapter 8. (See "Walking Tour 2: Georgetown" on p. 191.)

Marjorie Merriweather Post, heir to the Post cereal fortune, was a businesswoman, philanthropist, and art collector—though she is more popularly remembered as a wealthy socialite, known in her day as "the Queen of Washington." As a collector, her most notable achievement was assembling one of the most important collections of Russian imperial art outside Russia today. It is on view along with her also impressive French decorative arts collection in the 40-room home

she bequeathed to the pubic as a museum, officially **Hillwood Museum and Gardens** ✯✯ (4155 Linnean Ave. NW; ☎ 202/686-5807; Metrobus [L1] or [L2] Connecticut Avenue to Tilden Street and walk east on Tilden to Linnean Avenue and turn left; www.hillwoodmuseum.org; by reservation only, $12 adults, $10 seniors 65 plus, $7 college students, $5 students 6–18, under 6 not admitted; Tues–Sat 10am–5pm, closed Jan and most holidays; reservations required). Rooms are furnished with outstanding examples of Russian Fabergé, ceramics, glass, textiles, and metalwork. Post acquired these objects when her third husband, Joseph E. Davies, served as U.S. ambassador in Moscow from 1937 to 1938 during Stalin's reign of terror. In the turmoil, imperial art went on the market with the approval of the Soviet government in need of cash, which Post readily provided. Treasures include a portrait of another empress, Catherine the Great of Russia in the entry hall and two chest of drawers (called commodes) flanking the library door made by the official cabinet maker to Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette.

Surrounded by woodlands, the 25-acre estate on which Hillwood sits is landscaped with "pleasure gardens." Audio tours and guided tours are available, but I think the best way to see the house is to simply pick up a copy of Hillwood's complimentary 25-page tour and souvenir booklet and go at your own pace through the house and gardens. Though advance reservations are required to enter the estate, you can arrive at any time of the day and take as long as you want to explore.

Woodrow Wilson, America's 28th President, was too ill to attend the inauguration of his successor. Instead he was driven to his new home in the prestigious Kalorama neighborhood. His final residence, preserved as he left it, is the **Woodrow Wilson House** (2340 S St. NW; ☎ 202/387-4062; Metro: Dupont Circle; www.woodrowwilsonhouse.org; $7.50 adults, $6.50 seniors 65-plus, $3 students 7-plus; Tues–Sun 10am–4pm except major holidays). Guided tours lasting about 60 minutes are scheduled on the hour; you can reserve on the website (above) or join as a walk-in visitor. The tour focuses on Wilson's Washington years (1912–1924), examining his public persona while allowing a peek behind the draperies into his personal life. Furnishings, White House objects, personal memorabilia, and elaborate gifts of state help tell the story. A mosaic of St. Peter hangs in the Drawing Room, a gift from Pope Benedict XV when the Wilsons toured Europe at the conclusion of World War I. Edith's portrait hangs above the mantle. The only presidential home open to the public in Washington, it's a natural stop for students of diplomacy.

Mary McLeod Bethune, a child of former slaves, became the most celebrated African-American figure of the New Deal era. Her Logan Circle town house, where she lived for 6 years from 1943, honors her work. It is now a National Park Service museum called the **Mary McLeod Bethune Council House National Historic Site** (1318 Vermont Ave. NW; ☎ 202/673-2402; Metro: McPherson Square; www.nps.gov/mamc; free admission; Mon–Sat 10am–4pm, closed Thanksgiving, Dec 25, and Jan 1). The house also served as the first headquarters of the National Council of Negro Women, which Bethune founded. A tireless activist, she served as an advisor on African-American affairs to four presidents. When President Franklin D. Roosevelt appointed her Director of the Division of Negro Affairs of the National Youth Administration, it was the highest position in the federal government ever held up to that time by an African-American woman. Bethune is

not a familiar name today. But her life remains an excellent example of courage and determination.

Stephen Decatur, born to a prominent Philadelphia family, joined the new U.S. Navy in 1798 and quickly earned fame for his heroism in 1804 during the Barbary Wars in the Mediterranean. After more valiant service in the War of 1812, he and his wife became celebrity residents of Washington. Their home is now the **Stephen Decatur House Museum** (1610 H St. NW; ☎ 202/842-0920; Metro: Farragut West; www.decaturhouse.org; donation requested; Mon–Sat 10am–5pm, Sun noon–4pm, closed Thanksgiving, Dec 25, and Jan 1). Escorted tours lasting about 40 minutes begin at 15 minutes after the hour. The three-story, Federal-style brick mansion, built around 1818, is one of only three surviving residences designed by Benjamin Henry Latrobe, known as the "Father of American Architecture." Its location 1 block from the White House overlooking Lafayette Park made it a very fashionable residence. The tour focuses on the city's social life of the period and on Decatur's exploits, including his duel with a political enemy that cost him his life at the age of 39.

Born a slave in Maryland, Frederick Douglass secretly learned to read and managed to escape to New York City when he was 20. There he founded an anti-slavery newspaper, wrote books, and made good use of his oratorical skill to press the abolitionist cause. In 1877, he was named U.S. Marshall of the District of Columbia. He and his wife purchased a hilltop home in the city's Anacostia neighborhood. Dubbed Cedar Hill, it is now a National Park Service museum called the **Frederick Douglass National Historic Site** (1411 W St. SE; ☎ 202/426-5961; Metro: Anacostia and B-2/Mt. Rainier bus; www.nps.gov/frdo; free admission; daily Apr 15–Oct 15 9am–5pm, Oct 16–Apr 14 9am–4pm, closed Thanksgiving, Dec 25, Jan 1). An escorted tour of the white-brick house, with a 17-minute film, begins at the Visitor Center at W and 15th streets SE at the foot of the hill. Among Douglass' personal artifacts on exhibit is Abraham Lincoln's cane, a gift from Mary Todd Lincoln after her husband's assassination. If you take public transportation: The B-2 bus stops in front of the house. But to reach the Visitor Center, walk a half block down W Street to 15th Street. Note that Anacostia is a low-income neighborhood where crime remains a problem. If you have safety concerns, consider taking a taxi to the museum; you can summon a return taxi from the Visitor Center. This is the only attraction in this guide to which I am in any way uneasy about sending you. Another option is to go by Tourmobile. A special 2 ½-hour tour departs at noon daily from the Washington Monument and Arlington National Cemetery from June 15 through Labor Day. Tickets ($7 adults; $3.50 children 3–11) should be purchased at least 30 minutes in advance from either departure point.

Alice Paul, a lifelong activist for women's rights, founded the historic National Women's Party in 1917 to pressure Congress and the White House for the right to vote. The organization's headquarters and Paul's home for 43 years was the **Sewall-Belmont House** (144 Constitution Ave. NE; ☎ 202/546-1210; Metro: Union Station; www.sewallbelmont.org; $5 donation suggested; Tues–Fri 11am–3pm, Sat noon–4pm except federal holidays). Mothers, be sure to bring your daughters here if they or you have any political ambitions. Bring your sons, too, as this is a movement of which they also should be aware. Inspiring 60-minute tours, given on the hour spotlight Paul and early suffragist leaders—Susan B.

Anthony, Lucretia Mott, Elizabeth Cady Stanton—who fought long and hard to get the vote for their sex and to obtain equal legal rights for them.

Paul's organization had a particularly tough time. Its members marched, picketed the White House, got arrested, and were repeatedly sent to jail, where they staged hunger strikes and suffered abominable conditions. These nonviolent tactics are seen as a precursor to the later civil rights movement. At the same time, Paul trained novice female lobbyists in the Sewall-Belmont House to present the organization's case to Congress. In 1920, the 19th Amendment granting women the right to vote was ratified.

But Paul fought on for equal rights for women, writing the original Equal Rights Amendment in 1923. The fight for an amendment, as yet unratified, continues. But the National Women's Party no longer lobbies; it has transformed itself into a public education organization. The Sewall-Belmont House, a museum recalling and reaffirming the organization's goals, displays political cartoons, banners, and photos of the fight for the right to vote.

The house itself, a grand Georgian-style mansion set in the heart of Capitol Hill, is one of the oldest in the city, built in 1800. Robert Sewall was the original owner but he rented it to Albert Gallatin, Treasury Secretary under Presidents Jefferson and Madison. As a tenant, Gallatin drafted the financial details of the Louisiana Purchase in the house. The Belmont in the name is Alva Belmont, who bought it for the National Women's Party in 1929.

WASHINGTON'S ARCHITECTURAL STANDOUTS

Washington's first major buildings were the White House and the Capitol begun in 1793, a full 7 years before the city became the seat of government. From the outset, talented architects and designers accepted the challenge to create monumental structures for the capital city of a new nation. Often the designs reflected the marble domed and columned models of ancient Greece and Rome, a way of giving the new city a grandeur it had yet to earn. Sometimes they goofed, bequeathing the city "standouts" reviled by critics and citizens alike. As you may already have discovered, the city has no high-rises; Congress in 1910 set a height limit to preserve the skyline view of the Washington Monument, Capitol dome, and other federal monuments. Those skyscrapers you see in the distance across the Potomac River spring from Virginia soil.

I have cited many admirable buildings in earlier sections of this chapter. But other structures, perhaps not serving such notable public uses, also merit the attention of visitors interested in urban architecture. I list my seven additional "standouts" in order of their potential to interest visitors to the city—their "wow" power, as it were.

The **Washington National Cathedral** ★ kids (Wisconsin Ave. at Massachusetts Ave. NW; ☎ 202/537-6200; Metrobus [N2], [N4], [N6] from Dupont Circle; www.cathedral.org/cathedral; Sun 8am–6:30pm, Mon–Fri 10am–5:30pm, Sat 10am–4:30pm) is one of the top architectural sights in Washington. For full information refer to the walking tour of Embassy Row (p. 203).

Completed in 1908, the mammoth marble **Union Station** (Massachusetts and Louisiana aves. NE; ☎ 202/289-1908; Metro: Union Station; www.unionstationdc.com; always open) was designed to serve as a triumphal gateway to the city. At the time, it was the largest train station in the world. The enormous

Waiting Room sprawls beneath a barrel-vaulted ceiling gilded with 72 pounds of 22-karat gold leaf; the **Grand Concourse** was patterned after the Baths of Diocletian in Rome. At 760 feet in length and 130 feet high, it is one of the largest public spaces built in the country.

A bit of a curiosity, the **Old Post Office Pavilion** (12th St. and Pennsylvania Ave. NW; ☎ 202/289-4224; Metro: Federal Triangle; www.oldpostofficedc.com; free entry; Mar–Aug Mon–Sat 10am–8pm and Sun noon–7pm, Sept–Feb Mon–Sat 10am–7pm and Sun noon–6pm) was the city's first "skyscraper," its first steel-framed structure, and the first government building to have its own electric power plant. Built in 1899 in Romanesque revival style, and looking entirely out of place among its neoclassical neighbors, it once was home to the U.S. Post Office and the D.C. Post Office. But just 15 years after its debut, it was regarded as dated and faced demolition. Then the Depression intruded, and later preservationists stepped in to save it as an architectural monument. Today it houses shops and a food court. You can ride to the top of the 315-foot-high **Clock Tower** (second highest view point only to the Washington Monument) for a 360-degree view of the city. In the tower are the **Congressional Bells,** a bicentennial gift from Great Britain to the U.S. Congress. They were modeled after the bells of Westminster and ring on holidays. Practice rings can be heard at 6:30pm on many Thursdays.

Notable for its unusual shape, the result of an odd triangular-shaped lot, **The Octagon** (1799 New York Ave. NW; ☎ 202/638-3221; Metro: Farragut West; www.theoctagon.org; walk-in visits temporarily discontinued beginning Jan 1, 2006) also takes its place in history as the temporary residence of President James Madison and his wife Dolley. This lovely brick building, dating to 1801, houses the architectural and design museum of the American Architectural Foundation. The Madisons moved in after the British burned the White House in the War of 1812. The Treaty of Ghent, ending the war with Great Britain, was signed in the second-floor parlor on Feb 17, 1815.

Despite its name, the Octagon is not eight-sided. The name may derive from its round entrance hall, a type that in the 18th century was often constructed with eight angled walls and called "octagon salons." Architect William Thornton, first architect of the U.S. Capitol, actually conceived a three-story, six-sided structure incorporating a circle, two rectangles, and a triangle.

Even though visitors (except large groups) aren't permitted inside as I write this, take a walk around the building—initially a private residence—to admire its appearance. It is considered one of the best examples of Federal period architecture in the country. The style is an adaptation of the work of Robert Adam, a fashionable Scottish architect of the era who broke away from the rigidity of formal Georgian architecture.

Known as the "Church of the Presidents," **St. John's Episcopal Church** (Overlooking Lafayette Sq. at 16th and H sts. NW; ☎ 202/347-8766; Metro: McPherson Square; www.stjohns-dc.org; Mon–Sat 9am–3pm for visits) claims that every President since James Madison has worshipped here. Madison chose pew 54, paying the customary rental; since then #54 has been the presidential pew. Architect Benjamin Latrobe designed and built St. John's in 1816. A block away across Lafayette Square is Decatur House (see Historic Houses), which he also built. Initially the church was simple in design, taking on the shape of a cross. But later, architects added a Roman-style portico with six tall columns over the

entrance. After it came a triple-tiered steeple, which gives the building something of a top heavy look, like legendary Brazilian entertainer Carman Miranda hefting a pile of fruit on her head. Inside, take a look at an 18th-century prayer book in the President's pew autographed by a number of chief executives.

Washington's most historic lodging is the **Willard Hotel** (14th St. and Pennsylvania Ave. NW; Metro: Metro Center). A hotel has stood on this site since 1816; it acquired the name Willard in 1850 and the present 12-story building was completed in 1904. No other local hotel can match its legendary heritage. Julia Ward Howe wrote the "Battle Hymn of the Republic" in her room in the previous Willard during the Civil War. In 1963, The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., composed his "I Have a Dream" speech in the current Willard. The term "lobbyist," an important (if often criticized) profession in the nation's capital, was born in the Willard's lobby, where influence peddlers lurked in search of anybody with political clout. Henry Hardenbergh, who designed New York City's famed Plaza Hotel, came up with the plans for the Willard also. Pre-dating the Plaza by 3 years, it bears stylistic similarities and is more fanciful than most major buildings in the city. On your way down "Peacock Alley" (the hotel's block long promenade), check out the lobby, decorated with 35 different types of marble.

Political knavery thrust fame on **The Watergate** (2500–2700 Virginia Ave. NW; Metro: Foggy Bottom-GWU). This modernistic complex of buildings, another "eccentric" design, gained notoriety after the break-in that ultimately resulted in Richard M. Nixon's resignation as President. The hapless intruders actually entered the Virginia Avenue office building. But the complex also includes the Watergate Hotel, the Watergate condominium apartments, and another office building around the corner on New Hampshire Avenue. The clustered buildings are wrapped around a sunken courtyard with a cascading fountain that doubles as the Foggy Bottom neighborhood's shopping mart. Architectural critics struggle to define the Watergate style. Baroque is one suggestion. The buildings are curved; balcony-like platforms jut seemingly haphazardly from some floors, and here and there stretch rows of teeth-like crenulations, as if the structure is waiting to chomp down on anyone approaching too closely. The name is a puzzle. Some suggest it derives from a 1930s plan to build a ceremonial gate to the city close by. Others note that a block away, fast-flowing Rock Creek and the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal converge and empty into the Potomac—a water gateway to the city.

ESPECIALLY FOR KIDS

Washington, D.C. is a top city for families. Museums and other cultural organizations regularly present programs for children, but even those that don't are sure to appeal to the youthful curiosity of, well, youngsters. Below are my picks for the best family sites for all ages.

WHERE TO GO FOR CURRENT KIDS' PROGRAMS

Two good sources provide a current list of special programs for children and their parents:

- Look for family programs presented by the many Smithsonian museums at www.si.edu/events/kids/asp. Check this one out before you leave home. The schedule generally includes performances and classes up to 4 months in advance. Most are on the Mall.

- Once you reach Washington, take a look in the Friday "Weekend" section of the *Washington Post*. It prints a list of "For Families" programs for the upcoming week in the city and suburbs.

And one final tip: At each Smithsonian museum, ask at the Information Desk for a special kid/family guide to the exhibits.

TOP MUSEUMS AND OTHER ATTRACTIONS FOR THE YOUNGER SET

The O. Orkin Insect Zoo at the National Museum of Natural History is full of creepy, crawling things—many alive, some mounted. Younger kids also will be thrilled (and maybe a little frightened) by the **Hall of Mammals,** where mounted animals are posed in natural habitats. The pre-teen crowd will appreciate **Reptiles: Masters of the Land,** the museum's giant dinosaur show. At the **FossiLab,** they can watch the staff preserving and assembling a recent dinosaur find. See p. 108.

The National Air and Space Museum ★★★ is better for older children and teens who will enjoy the technical stuff; although, take the younger kids to the museum's giant-screen **IMAX Theater,** where they can choose from four action-packed shows. See p. 105.

The Bureau of Engraving and Printing has a 45-minute escorted tour that is short enough not to weary the young ones. And after all, who isn't thrilled to see a money factory? See p. 109.

The U.S. Botanic Garden (On the Mall; ☎ 202/225-8333; Metro: Federal Center SW; www.usbg.gov; free admission; daily 10am–5pm) comes complete with its own **Jungle,** a damp leafy tropical rainforest that grows, it seems, almost to the sky—or nearly up to the 93-foot-high dome anyway. In season, the staff gardeners also nurture two live-growing tunnels—one of green willows and another of flowering vines. Intrepid young explorers are invited to crawl inside.

The Smithsonian's National Zoo is a natural for youngsters. But the newest attraction, which debuted in 2004, has been created just for them. **Kids' Farm,** a 2-acre mock farm, sporting a big barn and a silvery pond, is home to cows, donkeys and goats. See p. 114.

The National Postal Museum demonstrates that as improbable as it may seem, delivering the mail has been a sometimes adventurous, even dangerous, undertaking down through the decades. This aspect of derring-do, plus a multiplicity of kid-friendly high-tech audiovisual devices and computer games, makes this museum a good bet for kids. See p. 121.

The National Aquarium (14th St. between Constitution and Pennsylvania aves. NW; ☎ 202/482-2825; Metro: Federal Triangle; www.nationalaquarium.com; $5 adults, $2 children 2–10, $4 military/seniors 60-plus; daily 9am–5pm except Thanksgiving and Dec 25) is a great place to take museum-weary youngsters. Stop here after you have toured the White House; it's just around the corner. This is a small aquarium, the ideal size to entertain but not tire the young folks. Here, they can get their hands wet, plunging into the simulated tidal pool called the **Touch Tank.** The hall's layout is convenient; you make a large loop, moving from one glass case to the next up one aisle and back another. Each tank represents a particular aquatic area of the country. The giant **loggerhead sea turtle** lives in a simulation of Gray's Reef, a limestone outcropping off Georgia's coast. **Leopard**

Around We Go

When the kids hit history overload, take time out for recess. For a real change of pace, treat them to the old-fashioned **Carousel of the Mall** (In front of the Smithsonian's Arts and Industries Building; Metro: Smithsonian; $2 per ride; daily spring–fall weather-permitting 11am–5pm). The music box sings a merry song; the colorfully painted horses maintain a lively canter, and the ride lasts about five smile-filled minutes. Restrooms are available inside the "Castle" behind the Carousel.

sharks glide ominously through a kelp forest, the kind found off California's central coast at Monterey. **Channel catfish,** eerie-looking creatures, float almost motionless in the Great Lakes. Try and be at the aquarium at 2pm for an aquarium keeper's talk and a **creature feeding**.

SUITABLE TOURS FOR KIDS

Children often get restless on guided tours. And who can blame them? I get restless, too, when guides don't know their subject or they know it too well and want you to hear every fact they've acquired. But **Bike the Sites** (p. 137) and **Washington Walks** (p. 138) schedule special family tours of the city that take into account the shorter attention spans of 4 to 9 year olds. **C&O Canal Boat Rides** (p. 137) and **DC Ducks** (p. 138), each offering a mini outdoor adventure, also rate as kid-friendly.

SHOWTIME

Many local cultural organizations, including the Smithsonian, schedule programs aimed at youngsters and their parents. Check out your show options and order tickets well in advance of your trip to Washington. (These performances are also popular with those of us who live here.)

The Smithsonian's **Discovery Theater** (☎ 202/357-1500; www.discoverytheater.si.edu; $6 adults, $4 children), located on the Mall, features puppets, storytellers, dancers, artists, musicians, and mimes in 300 performances from September to May.

Saturday Morning at the National (1321 Pennsylvania Ave. NW; Metro: Metro Center; ☎ 202/783-3372; www.nationaltheatre.org; free admission, tickets first come, first served; 9:30am and 11am) is a weekly program from September to April highlighting magicians, storytellers, actors, and musicians in shows aimed at children ages four and older.

The Kennedy Center's Family Theater (at the Kennedy Center; www.kennedy-center.org; Metro: Foggy Bottom-GWU), the center's newest stage, features an annual series of family-oriented entertainment. The on-going schedule includes theater, dance, music, puppetry, and opera for young people and their parents. In November 2006, Family Theater debuted "The Brand New Kid," a musical based on the book by TV anchor Katie Couric. Dates and prices vary for programs.

Stages for All Ages kids provides free tickets to live performances at more than 20 Washington area theaters for students 17 and under. The deal is that you get one free ticket for every full-priced ticket purchased. Tickets are limited to age-appropriate shows. Many are recommended for age 13 and older, but some will also suit the 4 to 8 crowd. Keep in mind that some of the theaters are in the suburbs, which poses a transportation problem if you don't have a car. Get details at ☎ 202/334-5885 or www.lowt.org.

BACK IN CLASS

Several museums offer regularly scheduled education programs for children and their parents.

Art experience classes during which children study the art works on view and then are given the opportunity to create their own pieces, are available at the **Arthur M. Sackler Gallery** (p. 119), **Washington National Cathedral** (p. 131; stone carving and stained glass-making classes are featured), and **The National Gallery of Art** (p. 104; it also offers a children's film program).

Remember the Children: Daniel's Story kids presents the story of the Holocaust from the perspective of a young boy growing up in Nazi Germany. It is a permanent exhibit at the **U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum** (14th St. at Independence Ave. SW; ☎ 202/488-0400; Metro: Smithsonian; www.ushmm.org; free admission; daily 10am–5:30pm except Yom Kippur and Dec 25). The museum recommends the 30-minute program for elementary and middle school students, assuring parents that "it presents the history of the Holocaust in ways that children can understand." Child development professionals and educators helped in its development, and three child psychiatrists (described as "eminent") reviewed all details.

Family Programs offered by the **National Building Museum** kids (401 F St. NW; ☎ 202/272-2448; Metro: Judiciary Square; www.nbm.org; free admission) focus on the fundamentals of architecture. Every Saturday "Bridging the Gap," 10:30–11am, is all about bridges. On Sunday, "Arches and Trusses: The Tension Builds," 11:30am–noon, introduces basic engineering concepts to young visitors.

WASHINGTON BY ESCORTED TOUR, INCLUDING SOME OFFBEAT WAYS TO GO

To stay within your budget (and if you have strong legs), don't pay for a guided tour to see Washington. It's really not necessary. The city seems almost to have been laid out to make sightseeing easy for out-of-towners. Most of what I've described in this chapter is located on the Mall, which is in the heart of the city. If you want more information than this guide can provide, pick up the free information brochures handed out at almost every attraction, especially National Park Service sites and Smithsonian museums. And take advantage of the free tours provided by many of these attractions.

But if you have difficulty getting around on foot, Washington is amply populated with willing guides. Crave a little fun while learning? Then join a bicycle, Segway, or Duck tour. Guided walking tours provide in-depth insights into selected neighborhoods. A Potomac River cruise/tour makes a refreshing break from museum-going.

BIKING TOURS

Bike the Sites ★ kids (Old Post Office Pavilion, Rear Plaza, 12th St. and Pennsylvania Ave. NW; ☎ 202/842-2453; Metro: Federal Triangle; www.bikethesites.com; tours range from $30–$40) organizes several bicycling itineraries, including family rides. The tours are imaginative and hit the city's high spots. But as someone who used to ride a bicycle to work but gave it up because of heavy traffic and rude drivers, I hesitate to recommend bicycling in downtown Washington. Take a bike tour only if you are an adept cyclist and familiar with urban traffic. Tour hours are seasonal, with the most frequent tours during the summer months. On the city's flatlands, all tours are rated "easy." The **Capitol Sites Tour** ($40 adults; $30 children 12 and under; daily 10am–1pm) is its most comprehensive, covering 7 to 8 miles from one end of the Mall to the other. Three family bike adventures, for children ages 4 to 10 with an adult, feature a combined ride and stroll lasting 2½ hours.

CANAL TOURS

C&O Canal Boat Rides ★ kids (C & O Canal Visitor Center, Georgetown, 1057 Thomas Jefferson St. NW; ☎ 202/653-5190; K St. Circulator bus to 30th St. NW; www.nps.gov/choh; $8 adults, $6 seniors, $5 children; early Apr–Oct Wed–Sun) take you back to the 1870s. The historic Chesapeake and Ohio Canal, a national parkland, parallels the Potomac River for 185 miles from Georgetown in Washington to Cumberland, Maryland. You board a mule-drawn, open-air barge for a 1-hour round-trip ride, simulating canal traffic of the past. The barge enters one lift lock and is raised eight feet from one canal level to the next. Park rangers don period clothing to add to the time travel effect, using stories and music to outline the canal's history. Progress is at a mule's pace—for me, a tedious mule's pace—so more active members of your family may want to walk with the mule tender on the towpath. July and August departures are Wednesday to Friday 11am, 1:30pm, and 3:30pm; and Saturday and Sunday 11am, 1:30pm, 3pm, and 4:30pm. In spring and fall departures are Wednesday to Friday 11am and 3pm and Saturday and Sunday 11am, 1:30pm, and 3pm.

SEGWAY TOURS

A Segway is a two-wheeled "human transporter" that shuttles you at a maximum speed of about 12 miles per hour. It differs from a scooter in that you navigate standing up rather than sitting. A first-time training lesson takes about 10 minutes. Keep in mind that wearing a helmet is necessary; President George W. Bush, an athletic mountain biker, took a tumble when he first operated a Segway. Two firms schedule Segway tours in the city. Minimum age for both is 16; weight limit, 260 pounds.

Segs in the City (Old Post Office Pavilion, Pennsylvania Ave. between 10th and 12th sts. NW; ☎ 800/734-7393; Metro: Federal Triangle; www.segsinthecity.net) operates a 2-hour tour from the Capitol to the White House ($70) at 10am and 2:30pm daily; a 1-hour tour around the Capitol and Supreme Court ($45) at 12:30pm and 5pm daily; and a 2-hour tour of Embassy Row ($70) at 5pm on Saturday and Sunday. The Embassy Row tour impresses me as the most suitable for Segway sightseeing due to the minimal number of intersecting streets, the lengthy uphill distance covered, and because most of the sights (40 embassies) can

be seen only from the outside anyway. Tours are limited to 6 people; this is probably the one to take if you are a Segway novice.

City Segway Tours (1455 Pennsylvania Ave. NW; ☎ 877/734-8687; Metro: Federal Triangle; www.citysegwaytours.com; Apr 1–Nov 30) organizes a 4-hour tour exploring the length of the Mall ($70) at 9:30am and 2pm daily. Don't book this one unless you really enjoy this mode of transportation—you've probably got to be a Segway fan to last the full tour.

AMPHIBIOUS TOURS

DC Ducks kids (Union Station; ☎ 202/832-9800; Metro: Union Station; www.dcducks.com; $32 adults, $16 children 4–12; seasonal spring–fall) offers 90-minute land and river tours. It's a not-so-serious look—let's make that a hokey look—at the city close-up and from the water that the youngsters will appreciate. A "duck" or more properly DUKW is an amphibious military personnel carrier dating back to World War II. The firm's restored 1942 ducks take you on a 90-minute tour—1 hour is spent "waddling" on the Mall and 30 minutes are devoted to gliding somewhat more gracefully on the Potomac River. Tours depart every 30 minutes from 9am to 4:30pm daily. Go for the offbeat experience, not for any insights into historical Washington.

SCANDAL TOURS

Scandal Tours/Gross National Product ★★ (Warehouse Theater, 1017 7th St. NW; ☎ 202/783-7212 or 800/979-3370 for reservations; Metro: Mt. Vernon Sq.–7th St. Convention Center; www.gnpcomedy.com; Apr 1–Labor Day Sat 1pm; $30 adults, $25 seniors; reservations required) takes you on a witty and irreverent motor coach jaunt, led by members of a local comedy troupe. They hit the U.S. Capitol, the White House, the Watergate Office Building, and even the Tidal Basin, where Thomas Jefferson keeps watch. The commentary can get racy, so parents beware. It's actually a highly informative tour through the dark side of the country's legislative history.

SCOOTER TOURS

City Scooter Tours ★ (Old Post Office Pavilion, 12th St. between Pennsylvania and Constitution aves. NW; ☎ 888/441-7575; Metro: Federal Triangle; www.cityscootertours.com; $75; Wed 1–4pm and Sun 10am–1pm; reservations required) provides a relaxed tour of the National Mall in self-operated electric convenience/mobility vehicles. They are aimed at people age 10 and older who have difficulty walking. Companions without a mobility problem can accompany the tour on bikes from Bike the Sites (see above). Children under 16 must be accompanied by a parent or guardian. The firm provides electric headsets so you can hear the guide's commentary.

WALKING TOURS

These are in-depth explorations of historic neighborhoods.

Washington Walks ★★★ (☎ 202/484-1565; www.washingtonwalks.com; $10; Apr–Oct) is a bargain-hunter's find and is aimed at locals, meaning you're going to get in-depth information, not some pat overview. Talented, loquacious guides—local teachers, actors, retired lawyers—offer up the witty, insider's view

of the city. From spring into fall, the organization offers a weekly schedule of walking tours. Most last about two hours, cost $10, and reservations aren't necessary. Saturday tours, varying from week to week, include **Arlington National Cemetery, Embassy Row, The White House Un-Tour** kids, **Movable Feast** (a snack-a-thon), and **Memorials by Moonlight**. The newest addition to the roster is **Bus, Camera, Action! Reel Washington,** a visit to sites portrayed in Hollywood political thrillers and urban adventures. One or two tours are offered Sunday, Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. Check the website above for tour hours and location; most depart from the nearest Metro station and cover an easy one mile in distance.

A Walking Tour of the Capitol ★★ (☎ 202/543-8919, ext. 17; Metro: Union Station; www.uschs.org; $10 adults, $5 children 6–10; Mar–Nov Mon 10am) is an exterior tour of "The Most Famous Building in the World" made by the United States Capitol Historical Society, which organizes the 2-hour Monday morning tour. Tight security inside the Capitol building prompted the organization to offer this exterior alternative. You won't get inside, but you will learn a lot more about the Capitol than you do on an official interior visit. No reservations are needed; tours go rain or shine. Meet outside the Union Station Metro at the top of the escalator to the Massachusetts Avenue exit.

BY BUS, TROLLEY, AND TRAM

These are the conventional tours, doing the city once-over-lightly to see the highlights and get oriented. Let me repeat: You don't really need to take a tour to see and enjoy Washington. But not everybody is up for long walks, especially in the heat of summer.

Tourmobile Sightseeing ★ (☎ 202/554-5100, www.tourmobile.com) is the only commercial tour company authorized by the National Park Service to provide point-to-point service on the Mall. Its **American Heritage Tour** is offered daily except Dec 25 and Jan 1, making 20 stops at 40 major historic attractions on the Mall and at Arlington National Cemetery. You hop-on and hop-off its 85-passenger red, white, and blue trams at any stop throughout the day, from 8:30am to 4:30pm April through September and 9:30am to 4:30pm October through March. Adult tickets are $20; children (3–11) are $10. Board and buy tickets at any Tourmobile stop. *Note:* The Mall is 2 miles long from the Capitol to the Lincoln Memorial, a daunting distance under a hot, humid summer sky. To its credit, the Tourmobile will help you save energy for those miles of corridors in the Smithsonian's museums. If your time in Washington is short, this is the tour to take because it focuses on the capital's major sights.

Tourmobile also schedules seasonal tours to **George Washington's Mount Vernon Plantation** (noon departure by motor coach from Washington Monument or Arlington National Cemetery; 4 hours; $25 adults, $12 children); and to **Frederick Douglass National Historic Site** (noon departure from Washington Monument and Arlington National Cemetery; 2½ hours; $7 adults, $3.50 children).

Old Town Trolley (Union Station; ☎ 202/832-9800; Metro: Union Station; www.trolleytours.com; $32 adults, $16 children 4–12; daily 9am–5:30pm except July 4, Thanksgiving, Dec 25, Sunday of Memorial Day weekend, and Marine Corps Marathon Sun in Oct) is another hop-on, hop-off tour. This one operates green

and orange trolley-type cars on rubber wheels, covering considerably more territory than the Tourmobile. The trolleys ply three separate loops stopping at 16 attractions, and you can switch from one loop to another and back. They are the **National Mall and Downtown Loop;** the **National Cathedral, Uptown, and Georgetown Loop;** and the **Arlington National Cemetery Shuttle.** To make the best use of your day's ticket, begin the day on the National Cathedral Loop, hopping off only to visit the cathedral. Make the rest of the loop, which amounts to a quick ride through several upscale neighborhoods, including Embassy Row. Then hop on the National Mall Loop, making the complete circuit before doubling back to visit one or more of the Mall museums. At mid-afternoon, catch the Arlington National Cemetery shuttle.

Martz Gold Line/Gray Line (Union Station; ☎ 800/862-1400; Metro: Union Station; www.graylinedc.com; daily except Thanksgiving, Dec 25, and Jan 1) operates 47- and 55-passenger motor coaches on a series of 4-hour and 9-hour tours daily. Take these tours if you want comfy seats, on-board restrooms, and air-conditioning. Study the tour descriptions carefully (see the website above) for a short list of attractions that you actually will visit and the much longer list you only will see from the bus window. Tours depart from Union Station.

They include **Tour G, Two Day Grand Tour** of Washington and George Washington's Mount Vernon (8:30am each day; 9 hours × 2; $90 adults, $45 children 3–11); **Tour BA, Interior of Public Buildings** (8:30am, 9 hours, $45 adults, $22 children); **Tour DC, All-Day Combination,** including Washington, Old Town Alexandria, Virginia (8:30am, 9 hours, $57 adults, $28 children); and other variations.

The firm also operates **Tour T, L'il Red Trolley,** another hop-on, hop-off motorized trolley service making a downtown and uptown loop (8:30am–4pm; $32 adults, $16 children).

ON THE POTOMAC RIVER

Capitol River Cruises (Washington Harbour, Georgetown, 31st and K sts. NW; ☎ 800/405-5511; Metro: Foggy Bottom; www.capitolrivercruises.com; $12 adults, $6 children 3–12; Apr–Oct daily on the hour from noon to 7 or 8pm) operates the Nightingale on 50-minute cruises from Georgetown to the Mall and back. ***The Nightingale*** is a small tug-like vessel with minimal frills and a pug-ugly look. But on a budget, this is the cruise for you. You will find a beverage and snack bar aboard. If you buy tickets on-line at the website about, the price is $10 adults/$5 children.

For river cruises to Mount Vernon, see p. 269.

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6 The 'Other' Washington

Where you meet Washingtonians and share the experiences that make them such enthusiastic residents

In Dublin, I crawl the pubs. In Rio, I gaze at the sleek bodies strolling Copacabana. In Amsterdam, I bicycle. That's what the locals do, and because part of the fun of travel is pretending I'm a local, I like to join them in their everyday pastimes whenever I can. It separates me from the tourist horde, which is sort of an ego-booster. And it's one of the best ways to meet the people who actually live in the place you are visiting.

So how do you go about meeting my friends and neighbors in Washington? I'll introduce you to a variety of ways. For example: Join us on the rugby field. Attend a book reading by a Washington author. Eat lunch at a crowded cafeteria in one of the Cabinet-level department buildings. Catch the always-bustling after-work happy hour scene. Participate in a protest march.

I realize you have plenty to see and do on your limited time in Washington. But try at least one or two of the activities I suggest. You will learn how we work, how we play, and more. And you will discover the "other" Washington, the exciting city beyond the monuments, memorials, and museums of the Nation's Capital. It's the Washington most visitors never get the chance to enjoy.

HOW WE LEARN

The nation's capital attracts new residents from all over the country—make that from all over the world—who arrive intent on getting things done. They are movers and shakers, always looking for ways to increase their knowledge—for fun, for profit, for political advantage. Whatever, they are the folks you will meet at these popular learning experiences.

DANCE LESSONS

In Washington, getting ahead socially and politically means knowing how to dance. This is a city of countless charity balls, embassy balls, an occasional White House dinner dance (depending on the style of the incumbent President), and, every 4 years, the Inaugural balls. Young dynamos climbing the ladder to the top don't want to look like klutzes, so they take dance lessons. You can too. Several Washington institutions provide inexpensive dance lessons on a regular basis, an opportunity for local folks to get to know each other and for you to get to know us.

Every Tuesday night, the **Jam Cellar** (Josephine Butler Parks Center, 2437 15th St. NW; ☎ 202/558-0338; www.thejamcellar.com; Metro: Woodley Park–Zoo and 10-minute walk) hosts a free, 30-minute beginners swing-dance lesson from 9 to 9:30pm. Afterwards, a swing-dance party bounces until midnight to DJ tunes ($6). The center is located in a restored Italian Renaissance-revival mansion that may be the most elegant place in which you ever dance. Once the home of both the Embassy of Hungary and the Embassy of Brazil, it features a 4,000-square-foot grand ballroom with 14-foot high ceilings, French doors, and a gleaming oak parquet floor.

Go Bollywood—That's right, Bolly with a "B." Consider it another aspect of Washington's rich international life; the metropolitan area has a large Indian population. If you saw the lively dance parties in such India- and Indian-themed movies as "Monsoon Wedding" and "Bend it Like Beckham," and you dreamed of joining in, now you can. Twice weekly, **Dhoonya Dance School** (Coors Dance Studio at Flashpoint, 916 G. St. NW; ☎ 856/625-8406; www.dhoonyadance.com; Metro: Gallery Place–Chinatown) provides introductory lessons to the energetic Bollywood style—a sort of shoulder, wrist, and hip step that works up a sweat. Introductory lessons are taught at 1pm Sunday and 8:30pm Thursday. The price is $15.

Washington is said to have one of the largest gay and lesbian populations in the country, in part because of this city's general acceptance. We're friends, neighbors, and relatives. To meet this segment of the city's culture, take in a non-intimidating gay/lesbian function. A square dancing group, **D.C. Lambda Squares** (First Baptist Church, 17th and O sts. NW; Metro: Dupont Circle) promenades and "doe-say-does" with Mainstream, Plus, and Advanced steps. Sessions are 7:30 to 9:30pm Thursday.

Those with exotic tastes can join a lesson in belly dancing at **Café Citron** (1343 Connecticut Ave. NW; ☎ 202/530-8844; www.cafecitrondc.com; Metro: Dupont Circle). From 8 to 9pm every Saturday night, the international-style bar offers a belly dancing class followed by a belly dance performance.

AUTHOR/POET READINGS AND SIGNINGS, BOOK DISCUSSIONS

Washington is full of issue advocates with a message, and many of them put their arguments in print. Local bookstores are full of thick tomes by local authors—fiction and nonfiction; they and a steady influx of writers from beyond the Beltway appear regularly at bookstores, libraries, nonprofit think tanks, and university campuses to read from their latest opus, to talk about their work, and (they hope) autograph a copy for you. Invariably, these events are free.

Before you arrive, check the websites of the individual bookstores. Once you're in town, pick up a free copy of the *City Paper,* distributed widely, and look for upcoming events in the "Books" section. It is published weekly on Thursday. Also on Thursday, the District insert in the *Washington Post* (35¢) lists book functions in the "Community Events" column. On Sunday, the *Washington Post*'s Book World section ($1.50) highlights upcoming book events in its weekly "Literary Calendar." Or drop by a nearby bookstore and pick up a copy of its upcoming events calendar. Events are scheduled at varying hours from morning to evening.

In 2006, former Presidential candidate George McGovern discussed his book, *Social Security and the Golden Age* at **Olsson's Books & Records** (Penn Quarter, 418 7th St. NW; ☎ 202/638-7610; www.olssons.com; Metro: Archives-Navy Memorial). Travel writer Frances Mayes, who chronicled her explorations of Europe in *A Year in the World: Under the Tuscan Sun,* recalled her adventures at **Politics & Prose** (5015 Connecticut Ave. NW; ☎ 202/364-1919; www.politics-prose.com; Metro: Van Ness–UDC). Eric Pankey and David Rivard read from their poetry at **Chapters** (445 11th St. NW; ☎ 202/737-5553; www.chaptersliterary.com; Metro: Metro Center). Though the readings feature all varieties of literature, as the examples above illustrate, the emphasis generally is on nonfiction works arguing politics, international affairs, national, and economic questions and other issues confronting the country and the world. In a single week in September 2006, you could have heard former U.S. Senator John C. Danforth discuss his book *Faith and Politics;* former *Washington Post* writer Mryra MacPherson offer insights into her biography, *Governments Lie: The Life and Times of Rebel Journalist I.F. Stone;* legendary White House reporter Helen Thomas read from her book, *The Watchdogs of Democracy;* and noted nuclear energy critic Helen Caldicott arguing the theme of her book, *Nuclear Power Is Not the Answer.*

Other bookstores (all downtown or close by) with author events include:

- **Kramer Books** (1517 Connecticut Ave. NW; ☎ 202/387-1400; www.kramers.com; Metro: Dupont Circle)
- **Borders Books** (1801 L St. NW; ☎ 202/466-4999; www.bordersstores.com; Metro: Farragut North) and (600 14th St. NW; ☎ 202/737-1385; www.borders stores.com; Metro: Metro Center)
- **Barnes & Noble Booksellers** (555 12th St. NW; ☎ 202/347-0176; www.barnesandnobleinc.com; Metro: Metro Center) and (Georgetown, 3040 M St. NW; ☎ 202/965-9880; www.barnesandnobleinc.com; K St. Circulator bus)
- And a second **Olsson's Books & Records** (1307 19th St. NW; ☎ 202/785-1133; www.olssons.com; Metro: Dupont Circle).

Gay literature, both fiction and nonfiction, is the twice monthly topic at an informal book discussion group called **Boys and Books** (www.boysnbooksdc.org). Sessions are scheduled at 7:30pm every other Tuesday at various downtown locales. Check the website for schedules, books to be discussed, and meeting places. Sessions are also listed in *Metro Weekly*.

LECTURES/TALKS/DEMONSTRATIONS

I've said this in other ways elsewhere in this guide, but it bears repeating. A sizeable percentage of Washingtonians savor intellectual pursuits. They form the receptive audience for a variety of scholarly lectures and other programs organized by the Smithsonian and other museums, local universities, think tanks (right, left, and independent) and federal and city departments and other agencies. Often (but not always) free, they are generally listed in the *City Paper* and the *Washington Post* in the same section as author readings (see above). In advance of your visit, you can check out Smithsonian and other museum events on their websites (see Chapter 5). Hours vary from morning into evening.

In a single day—yes, day—in 2006, you could have heard a talk on Benjamin Franklin at the **Library of Congress** (p. 102), on female aviators at the **National**

Air and Space Museum (p. 105), on jazz trumpeter Miles Davis at the **National Museum of American History** (p. 115), on the trial of Aaron Burr at **Catholic University** (p. 52), on various types of savings and investment accounts at the **D.C. Small Business Development Center** (Howard University School of Business, 2600 6th St. NW), on colonial botany at the **U.S. Botanic Garden** (p. 163), on the art of Renoir at the **Phillips Collection** (p. 121), on bird and wildlife painting at the **National Zoo** (p. 114), and on the history of iron at the **Navy Memorial.** Lecturers include diplomats, professors, museum curators, military and government officials, and scientists, among others—many the leading experts in their field. The Phillips Collection (p. 121) hosts a weekly arts talk called **Artful Evenings** (1600 21st St. NW; ☎ 202/387-2151, ext. 260; www.phillipscollection.org; Metro: Dupont Circle). They are held at 6 and 7pm every Thursday. Sessions are free, but you must pay the museum's admission fee, which varies. Talks tend to focus on the museum's current shows. Usually, the museum's curators who organize the art shows or the education staff lead the talks, but occasionally guest lecturers are invited to provide expert insights into a particular painting or a show.

For those of us who like to travel, a lively and entertaining option (for a fee) is the **National Geographic Society** kids (Downtown, Grosvenor Auditorium, 1600 M St. NW; ☎ 202/857-7700; www.nglive.org; Metro: Farragut North). Throughout the year, the famed magazine presents live educational lectures and films on travel one or more evenings a week. Many make excellent, affordable family entertainment. Often a series of lectures (single tickets available) focus on subjects such as adventure travel, masters of photography, and fantastic journeys. In 2006, lecturers took the audience along Scotland's Whisky Trail (with a tasting), to Capt. John Smith's Chesapeake Bay, to the Himalayas, and on the Frankincense Trail to Oman and Yemen, among dozens of places. Many of the lecturers are authors of stories that have appeared in the *National Geographic* magazine. Tickets for nonmembers of the society range from $14 to $28, depending on the lecture. Travel films alternate with the lectures. A recent series, "All Roads Film Festival," presented films from 15 countries spotlighting 24 tribal communities from around the world. "The Lore of Love," as an example, was an Australian feature detailing how indigenous Australian elders teach their granddaughters the themes of love, sexuality, and traditional marriage. Tickets range from $5 to $10. Presentation times vary, but most begin at 7:30pm.

CLASSES IN SOCIAL ACTIVISM

In a city of issue-oriented achievers, it's no surprise there's a school for activists, offering a wide selection of one-session, two-hour classes for as little as $10 to $50. Called **SALSA (Social Action & Leadership School for Activists;** 1112 16th St. NW; ☎ 202/234-9382; www.hotsalsa.org; Metro: Farragut North), it's a program of the Institute for Policy Studies. A liberal think tank, the Institute lists entertainer Harry Belafonte and *The Nation* editor Katrina vanden Heuvel on its Board of Directors.

In 2006, SALSA's fall calendar listed such classes as "Targets, Tactics and Goals: Gaining Power to Build a Student Movement" (2 hr., $10); "Volunteering Overseas: Alternatives to the Peace Corps (2 hr., $30); "How to Get U.S. Media Coverage on Global Issues" (2 hr., $30); "Breaking into Political Journalism"

(2 hr., $30); "Grassroots Organizing Essentials" (2 hr., $30); and "Techno-Activism 1.0" (2 hr. $50).

The classes attract lots of issue-oriented folks. They include people who work in nonprofit organizations, social justice groups, environmentalists, community leaders, union officials, and such do-gooders as volunteers in rape crisis centers. The advice tends to be more practical than theoretical, and lots of give and take between leader and class is typical.

PHOTOGRAPHY LESSONS

In this very photogenic city, tourists aren't the only ones carrying cameras. Professional photographers, a majority of them working for national and international news organizations, ply the byways of government capturing the news of the moment. You, too, can learn how best to portray Washington in photos at **Washington Photo Safari** (Renwick Gallery, 17th and Pennsylvania Ave. NW; ☎ 877/512-5969 and 202/537-0937; www.washingtonphotosafari.com; Metro: Farragut West). The organization schedules three or four half-day and full-day photo sessions every week. A staff of eight professional photographers, led by architectural photographer E. David Luria, instructs in the art of photographing the city's memorials, monuments, and museums, interior and exterior. The basic course, Monuments and Memorials, is recommended for first-timers. Luria, whose photos have appeared in more than 100 publications including *Time* magazine, leads this one himself. With more than 30 magazine covers to his name, Luria also has led numerous photography tours for the Smithsonian's Resident Associates program. The full-day Monuments and Memorials session ($119) begins at the Renwick gallery. The morning half covers much of the Mall; the afternoon half visits the Adams Morgan neighborhood (international flavor), Washington National Cathedral (gothic gem), and the Iwo Jima Memorial. Saturday's half-day session ($69) begins at 9:30am and duplicates the Wednesday morning itinerary. An optional afternoon session ($50 more) takes in varied itineraries.

STARGAZING

Washington is home to the U.S. Naval Observatory, charged with keeping the United States on time. In this increasingly complex technological world, knowing the precise time around the globe is critical—for example, in coordinated military action or space shots. The observatory achieves this by making regular observations of the sun, moon, planets, selected stars, and other celestial bodies to determine their positions and motions and by using the data obtained to maintain a master clock. The popular tours of the facility and a second-stargazing program in Rock Creek Park allow Washingtonians an opportunity to learn more about the observatory's important function and about the night sky. Federal workers are said to be clock watchers; at the Observatory this definitely is true. It's one of the little-known activities of the government, and you can see it happen. As an aid to their education, the *Washington Post* regularly alerts readers to what constellations will be appearing overhead. You, too, can stargaze with the astronomers. Public tours of the **Naval Observatory** (Observatory Circle, Wisconsin Ave. NW; fax 202/762-1467; www.usno.navy.mil/tour_info.shtml; Metrobus: [N2], [N4], or [N6]) are offered from 8:30 to 10:30pm on selected Mondays. You will be briefed on

The Best Source for Current Schedules

To participate in some of the meet-the-locals activities described in this chapter, you are going to have to make reservations or other arrangements well in advance of your trip. I'll tell you when advance reservations are necessary; phone numbers and websites are provided for this purpose.

Once you have arrived in Washington, the most thorough listing of current activities aimed at Washington residents—athletic, cultural, kids, nightlife—is found in the **City List** pages of the ***City Paper.*** A hefty tabloid, the free publication is distributed weekly on Thursday in news boxes, coffeehouses, and neighborhood markets throughout the city. You also can search the City List online at www.washingtoncitypaper.com.

Other sources include the ***Washington Post*'s** Thursday **District Weekly** insert, its Friday **Weekend** section, and the **Literary Calendar** in Sunday's **Book World** section. A newsstand copy of the Post is 35¢ weekdays, $1.50 on Sunday. Current gay and lesbian-oriented programs are listed in the **Community Calendar** of ***Metro Weekly,*** a 60-plus page free magazine distributed city-wide in news boxes on Thursday. The Community Calendar also is available on line at www.metroweekly.com.

the observatory's timekeeping assignment and get a look at the night sky through its telescope. Reserve free tickets on line or by fax (202/762-1489). For 50 years, a program called **Exploring the Sky** (Rock Creek Park Nature Center, Military and Grover roads NW; ☎ 202/895-6070; www.nps.gov/rocr; Metrobus: [S2] or [S4]) has encouraged residents and visitors to see the stars and planets through telescopes. Sessions are held shortly after sunset once each month on Saturday from April through November. Beginners, including children, are welcome. Instruction is provided by National Park Service rangers and members of the National Capital Astronomers. For a schedule, check the website.

HOW WE WORK

The primary work of Washington is governing. The watchdog press and foreign embassies each have a role in the process. This is the home, to borrow a word from President George W. Bush, of the "deciders," at least on matters of national and international concern. Much of the action takes place in sprawling office buildings behind closed doors. The city is full of big secrets, at least until a whistle blower leaks a controversial item to the *Washington Post* or *New York Times.* But since the United States strives—we hope it does, anyway—to nurture a government "of the people, by the people, and for the people," a lot of what Washington does is required to take place in public. Below, I'll show you where to see the nation's leaders at work. And you will get a peek at the press, foreign embassies, and organizations involved in the governing process.

VISIT A MEMBER OF CONGRESS

U.S. senators and representatives need the votes of American citizens to keep their jobs. The Republican Party, which took a big thumping in the 2006 congressional election, learned that lesson the hard way, and saw many of its members evicted from Capitol Hill. So, if they are savvy, they are receptive to meeting and greeting residents of their home jurisdictions. Of course, the warmth of your welcome—a polite nod or a hearty handshake and pat on the back—may be determined by whether you belong to the same political party or have made a big contribution in time or money to their election. Don't just drop in—although that is always an option. You will get a better reception if you make an appointment. Legislators are busy people, often out of the office at committee meetings or voting on the floor of the Senate or House. With an appointment, you stand a good chance of being ushered into the legislator's personal office. Even without an appointment, drop by the office to pick up gallery passes. You must have the passes to see the chambers (one pass per person for each chamber) where the Senate and House meet or to sit in on a session of either body.

Senate offices are located in the Russell, Dirksen, and Hart buildings. The three are clustered just north of the Capitol grounds at 1st Street and Constitution Avenue NE. Offices of the representatives are housed in the Cannon, Longworth, and Rayburn buildings, similarly clustered on the immediate south side of the Capitol grounds at New Jersey Avenue and Constitution Avenue SE. You must go through a security check to enter, but no pass is required. To contact the staff of your legislator, call the main number of the **Senate** (☎ 202/224-3121) or the **House of Representatives** (☎ 202/225-3121).

SIT IN ON A MEETING OF THE SENATE OR HOUSE/ATTEND A CONGRESSIONAL HEARING

You don't need a pass to sit in on a congressional hearing. Often the hearings are more interesting than sessions of the full Senate and House. At a hearing, you are sitting up close to the action, which can get heated. Legislators ask nitty-gritty questions, sparring verbally with each other and outside witnesses. This is where you hear real debate, senators attacking each other over such issues as presidential appointments to the Supreme Court, tax cuts or hikes, changes to Social Security, or balancing the federal budget. The Senator from Missouri, Harry S. Truman, my personal political hero, propelled himself into the vice presidency and ultimately into the White House as the hard-working chairman of a special Senate committee investigating waste and mismanagement in defense spending prior to World War II. He and his committee traveled the country searching for evidence of waste and then summoned government, corporate, and union officials to its Senate committee room to answer probing questions that touched off occasional angry exchanges. The committee's findings resulted in a major overhaul of spending procedures just as America entered the war. Truman biographer David McCullough writes that "no one could remember congressional hearings being handled with such straightforwardness and intelligence." Keep this is mind when you watch the nation's current crop of legislators in committee. On a personal note, my wife likes to tell this story about a House committee meeting she sat in on. It illustrates the impact these committee hearings can have on individual citizens. For several years, she was a lobbyist for a national insurance association.

One day she was on the Hill for a committee "mark-up" session on a tax bill that interested her association. A "mark-up" is when the committee goes line by line through a bill to make sure it's accurate; this comes after the debate but before the vote. Before my wife's part of the bill was discussed, the committee took up a provision allowing homeowners to claim tax deductions for expenses involved in renting a house to a family member. Previously, no deductions were allowed for rentals within the family. Sandy's ears perked up because at the time we rented a house to my parents. We were, she learned that day, to become the unsuspecting beneficiaries of a piece of legislation working its way through the House process.

If an issue being tackled is controversial or of momentous importance—maybe universal health care some day—you may be crowded out by Washington insiders with a vested interest in the outcome.

You do need a pass to watch the **House and Senate in action.** Sparks can fly on the floor of either chamber, but ponderous oratory is more common. You may be surprised when stepping into the Senate or House gallery that only a half a dozen legislators are present on the chamber floor and another seated with a gavel at the desk on the podium. A lot of what the two bodies do in session is perfunctory. A representative praises the noteworthy achievement of a constituent; a senator makes a statement for the record citing an important development in his or her home state. These are not nation-shaking events that require the presence of all 100 senators or 435 representatives. Even during periods of debate, legislators who don't plan to speak may skip the session; more than likely they have heard all the arguments in committee meetings many times before. When it's time for an important vote, they come hurrying when summoned. If you are lucky enough to be present during a vote, you should spot many of the familiar faces you see on the TV news. If a tie in a Senate vote is expected, the Vice President, whose constitutional function is to serve as president of the Senate, may preside and cast the winning vote. In both the Senate and House chambers, an aisle divides the desks of Republicans and Democrats. From the vantage of the presiding Vice President or the Speaker of the House, Democrats are seated on the right and Republicans on the left. You will note, however, that nobody stays seated very long. When debate is raging, legislators mingle with fellow party members plotting strategy or duck out to antechambers to consult aides. Those young men and women scurrying about on the floor are likely congressional pages delivering messages or otherwise running official errands for their bosses.

The busiest days on Capitol Hill, at least for public events, are Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday. Many legislators like to spend the weekend in their home states, skipping out of Washington on Friday and returning on Monday. This doesn't necessarily mean they are playing hooky to surf or ski. Keeping in touch with their constituencies is important if they want to be re-elected to office. Representatives, who serve two-year terms, especially are hard-pressed to raise campaign funds for the next election, which is always impending. As campaign costs soar, they increasingly must spend more time at fund-raising events back home. At the same time, they run the risk of being accused of contributing to what the voters may see as a do-nothing Congress.

The *Washington Post* prints a daily list of Capitol Hill events, listing public committee and nomination hearings and if and when the Senate and House are meeting. You also can check the websites of the **Senate** (www.senate.gov) and

the **House of Representatives** (www.house.gov). Most committee hearings are held in the morning; but afternoon hearings are frequent too. The Senate and House, when meeting, usually are called into session at noon. Sessions can last into the night and early morning hours if a controversial issue is at stake. To sit in on a session of the Senate or House you need to obtain a gallery pass. You can apply for passes in advance of your arrival or in person at your legislator's office. The passes are not dated, so you can choose what day or time you want to use them. On some days, only a handful of legislators may be on the floor handling routine business, and you won't have any difficulty getting a seat. When an important vote is pending, nearly every senator or representative shows up, and gallery seating may be tight.

CATCH THE SUPREME COURT IN ACTION

Here's another opportunity to be present when issues of national or even international significance are being considered. By the time a court case reaches the Supreme Court its outcome often can affect the way Americans live. You may hear lawyers pro and con debate issues involving criminal justice, environmental protection, taxes, business management, health, and more. The nine Justices of the Court hear cases from October to April. I outline the procedures for attending in a more detailed description of the Court in Chapter 5 (p. 101).

WATCH OR JOIN A PROTEST MARCH

No, I'm not being facetious here. Washington is surely the national leader as the site for protest marches and demonstrations. Some are organized in Washington itself; others descend on the city from elsewhere. As the national capital, Washington provides any demonstration, even a poorly attended one, a certain national status. And the presence of a large national and international press corps all but insures plenty of publicity. Depending on the issue, Washingtonians—an assertive population—fill the ranks of the protesters, often as leaders. I have marched more than once in front of the White House to support a cause in which I believe strongly.

Some protests are organized weeks or months in advance, and you will know about them before you arrive in Washington. Among the most historic in recent decades are the Vietnam War protests, when the city air was scented by tear gas; the civil rights march on Washington when the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., gave his "I Have a Dream Speech" on the Mall; marches in support of both sides of the abortion issue; and demonstrations against the financial policies of the World Bank at its headquarters in Washington.

More common, though, are small demonstrations outside a foreign embassy, challenging one or more of the home country's actions or policies. Unless you are a member of the organizing group, you are not likely to know in advance where and when the protest is scheduled. But if you are lucky enough to chance upon one—not at all unlikely—don't be shy. Hear what the group has to say, read the printed leaflets that inevitably are distributed, and ask questions. In many cases, you will be talking to exiles or expatriates acting to bring about political reforms in an abusive home government.

VISIT A FOREIGN EMBASSY

In Chapter 8, I guide you on a walking tour of Embassy Row, which is lined by numerous foreign embassies. You see them from the outside—which in itself is quite interesting. But try also to get an inside look behind the scenes. An amiable way to step inside an embassy is to attend a public function there. Many are quite lovely, built or decorated in a style illustrating national customs. The new Italian Embassy is a modernistic take on a Tuscan palazzo. Inuit sculpture from the territory of Nunavut adorns the interior of the Canadian Embassy. Consider a visit a sort of mini-trip abroad. Several embassies feature art galleries displaying native works; a few host music recitals and lectures. Look for a listing of current exhibits in the Galleries column of the free weekly *City Paper* or in the Friday weekend section of the *Washington Post*. These functions are part of the embassy's everyday work in promoting the national image—to increase tourism; to obtain economic or military aid; or—for a few—to counter negative publicity, such as a bad report about human rights abuses.

In a single week in 2006, the *City Paper* listed an exhibit of surreal paintings at the **Embassy of Chile;** a photography display at the **Embassy of the Czech Republic;** and "Impressions of Estonia," a show of artworks at the **Embassy of Estonia.** All were free events. In addition, the Embassy of Estonia scheduled "An Elegant Evening Affair." It featured a traditional Estonian buffet and a sampling of Estonian beers for $50. The Czech Embassy hosted a free reading of Joseph Topol's *Cat on the Rails.* The **Embassy of Austria** presented a free recital by a soprano and pianist. To join in, do a thorough search of the events listings in the two newspapers cited above. These events tend to draw well-traveled Washingtonians; often they have either been to the hosting country or plan to visit soon. In either case, they want to learn more about the country. I spent a year on a fellowship at the University of Santiago in Chile, which keeps me interested in exhibits at the Chilean Embassy. On opening night, the embassy may hold a reception to introduce a gallery show, perhaps with welcoming comments by the ambassador.

WATCH THE MEDIA REPORT THE NEWS

The media—newspapers, news magazines, TV news show, Internet blogs—isn't one of the three formal branches of the federal government. But the Founding Fathers considered freedom of the press crucial to democracy, enshrining it in the First Amendment in the Bill of Rights. As the source of major news year-around, Washington is home to on-site bureaus representing major media outlets nationally and internationally. The **Newseum,** which reopens in 2007, chronicles the role of the press in American society.

But to see an offshoot of the press at work, take a behind-the-scenes **Voice of America Tour** (330 Independence Ave. SW; ☎ 202/203-4990; www.voanews.com; Metro: Federal Center; Mon–Fri except federal holidays 12pm and 3pm; reservations recommended). The Voice of America is a 24-hour, international multimedia news broadcasting facility. On the tour, you will see VOA's bustling Newscenter, which operates 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The news staff broadcasts news reports live on radio, television, and the Internet in 44 languages. You are likely to see and hear several broadcasts, although you may not understand

what is being said at many of them. Advance reservations are recommended; children age 7 and older are welcome. While at the Voice of America, take a look at the historic mural, *The Meaning of Social Security,* by artist Ben Shahn. It was commissioned in 1940 for the Cohen Building, which houses VOA, to commemorate the 1935 Social Security Act. The legislation was a part of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's sweeping social reforms during the Great Depression.

If you can put together a group of 10 to 30 people (extended family, two families), tour the almost always busy newsrooms of the ***Washington Post*** (1150 15th St. NW; ☎ 202/334-7969; www.washpost.com; Metro: Farragut North; free admission; Monday only 10–11am and 1–2pm). One of the country's most important newspapers, the Post often can be an exciting place to be—especially if news is breaking. This is the newspaper that broke the Watergate story. Its coverage brought fame to reporters Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein and led to President Nixon's resignation. If you saw the movie *All the President's Men,* which portrayed the events of Watergate, you saw a replica of the Post's main newsroom where reporters pecked away at typewriters with piles of copy paper at their side. Computers have replaced typewriters and copy paper at today's Post, but otherwise the newsroom looks much the same. On a hot story like Watergate, the newsroom—the command center for city, suburban, national, and foreign news—takes on the look of controlled chaos. My advice, as a former editor and writer at the Post, is to take the latest tour in the day. On a morning newspaper, even a major one, the day gets underway slowly and gradually builds to a wild crescendo. Reporters return from their assignments in the afternoon and start writing frantically to beat the early evening deadlines. Many of the editors get to work at about the same time, pondering what stories to headline. If you visit at 10am, the earliest tour, you are apt to see only a few sleepy editors downing coffee at their desks. The tour takes about 45 minutes. In the past, you also got a look at the paper's massive printing presses, but they have been moved to other locations close to big circulation areas. Tour reservations are required; and it is recommended you make them one or two months in advance. Children must be age 11 or older.

GET BRIEFED ON THE GLOBAL ECONOMY

Given America's world status, Washington not surprisingly plays host to major international organizations, including three that tackle the challenges of the global economy: International Monetary Fund (IMF), Organization of American States (OAS), and World Bank. In recent years, meetings of both the IMF and the World Bank have been targeted by mass demonstrations protesting against a globalization that is corporate-led and marginalizes large numbers of people around the world. To see and learn how they and the OAS operate—and to hear what if any changes the protests have achieved—take the **IMF, OAS, and World Bank Walking Tour** (IMF Center, 720 19th St. NW; ☎ 202/623-7001; www.imf.org/center; Metro: Farragut West; free admission; second Thursday of every month 10am and 2pm). Advance reservations are required; complimentary snacks are served. The tour begins at the IMF, which has 184 member countries. You will hear a briefing and participate in a question-and-answer session. Briefings are very much a part of the Washington scene. The President gets a briefing daily on important news developments of the day. Briefings are crucial in the day-to-day

functioning of the Pentagon. It's how busy people with lots of responsibility keep tabs on what's happening. So picture yourself as an international bigwig being updated on the work of these three organizations. The briefers will tell you about the work of each, maybe outlining a current program or concern. Before you leave the IMF, take a look at the "Money Wall," which displays world currencies. You move on to the **OAS** (17th St. and Constitution Ave. NW), which has 35 members, for another briefing. While here, view the impressive Hall of the Americas, which features a tropical patio ringing a fountain suggesting Mayan, Aztec, and Zapotecan art. The **World Bank** (1818 H St. NW), the final tour stop, occupies a spare, modernistic building that its designers see as an architectural glimpse of the future. Here you get a third briefing and the opportunity to visit the InfoShop, which markets books, publications, and souvenirs related to the economy.

HEAR THE BIG BOSSES TAKE A BEATING

At times, it seems like the whole country is making fun of Washington. Like the late-night TV talk show hosts, we do it too. The **Capitol Steps** (Ronald Reagan Building, 1300 Pennsylvania Ave. NW; ☎ 202/312-1555; www.capsteps.com; Metro: Federal Triangle; $35) bash the leadership at 7:30pm every Saturday and Sunday night. With a strong and loyal Washington following, they've been at it for more than 25 years. Along the way, they have recorded 26 albums, including "I'm So Indicted."

The group made its debut in December 1981 when three staffers for Sen. Charles Percy of Illinois were assigned to plan entertainment for a Christmas party. The story they tell is that at first they wanted to stage a nativity play, but in all of Congress they couldn't find three wise men and a virgin. So they turned to the headlines of the day to create song parodies and skits that let their bosses have it smack between the eyes. They were a hit, and the show goes on.

Many of the Steps have quit their day jobs on Capitol Hill, and not all current members are former Hill staffers. But taken together, the cast has worked in 18 Congressional offices, and they have 62 years of collective Senate and House staff experience. They know where the bodies are buried. Attend a performance, and get an insider's view of how Washington really works.

TAKE A PEEK INTO THE MOVIE INDUSTRY

Movies are an important aspect of the city's cultural and working life. Seemingly year-round film crews are barricading downtown streets to film a new script set in the nation's capital. Years ago, I walked into the regular afternoon editor's news conference at the *Washington Post* and sat down next to Dustin Hoffman, who was researching his role as Watergate reporter Carl Bernstein in *All the President's Men*, the Watergate movie. Robert Redford, who played Bob Woodward, sat across the room. So many movies have been made on location that a tour company is now offering escorted tours to location sites. **On Location Tours** (Departing from near Union Station, Massachusetts, and Louisiana aves. NE; ☎ 212/209-3370; www.screentours.com; Metro: Union Station; $32; spring and summer daily 2pm, fall and winter Friday to Sunday 2pm). The 3-hour bus tour takes you to the location of movies filmed in Washington. You will, the tour company promises, stand on *The Exorcist* stairs at Georgetown University, visit the bar used in *St. Elmo's Fire,* and see locations for *Forrest Gump*. Clips from the movies shot at the locations add to

the experience. And you will hear lots of historical trivia about the sights visited. But unfortunately, the tour doesn't reveal much about the specifics of moviemaking in Washington. I'd like to know, for example, where the cast and crew of a movie stay when they are filming.

The Motion Picture Association of America, the lobbying arm of the American film industry, is located in Washington, where it can push for anti-film-pirating legislation. Film stars testify regularly before congressional committees in support of issues they back, and then they're spotted on the bar scene in Georgetown or Adams Morgan. Until recently, the American Film Institute, charged with rescuing and preserving America's fast-disappearing film heritage, was headquartered at the Kennedy Center. But when it moved, it didn't go far—to Silver Spring, Maryland, where it continues to feature movies for the movie buff. Art films, documentaries, and short subjects are screened daily beginning at 1pm (until 10pm daily) at the American Film Institute's **AFI Silver Theatre and Cultural Center** (Silver Spring, 8633 Colesville Rd.; ☎ 301/495-6720; www.afi.com/silver; Metro: Silver Spring and 2-block walk; administrative offices open weekdays 9am–5:30pm). The institute also schedules lectures and discussions by directors and actors. I listened to a charming, articulate Olivia de Havilland recall the troubled filming of *Gone With the Wind.* Though it was sad to see AFI leave the Kennedy Center, the move took it from an auditorium designed for live performances to its more appropriate location in a restored movie house.

LEARN HOW SECURITY AGENCIES NAB SPIES

Spies and traitors have lurked in the city's shadows in the past, and we can assume they are still around today. The Federal Bureau of Investigations has temporarily shut down its tours, which touched on spy tracking. But a good alternative is **Spy City Tours** (Departing Union Station, Massachusetts and Louisiana aves. NE; ☎ 800/GRAYLINE; www.grayline.com; Metro: Union Station; $79; Saturday 2pm). Organized by the International Spy Museum (p. 123), the 2-hour bus tour takes you to 25 of Washington's notable espionage sites. You will see the pub where traitor Aldrich Ames, a CIA agent doubling as a Soviet KGB mole, revealed the names of 25 American spies (all Russian citizens) in the Soviet Union—10 of whom were then shot in the back of the head. Ames' arrest in 1994 badly embarrassed the CIA. Along the way, you will learn a few spy techniques—how to maintain a fake identity, for example, or how to pass along secret files and participate in an undercover operation. You play the new recruit, and you will be tested on your skills of observation, evasion, and code-breaking. This is a fun tour on a serious subject. A full description of the tour is at www.spymuseum.org.

HOW WE RELAX

AT RECITALS

Classical music may be struggling in other parts of the United States, but it is doing well, thank you, in Washington. Free recitals, aimed at local music fans, are a regular item on the city's cultural calendar. Held in auditoriums in universities, churches, museums, and embassies, they draw an eclectic, multigenerational crowd. You may hear members of the National Symphony Orchestra going solo, university music professors or their accomplished students, individual stars from

the military bands, church organists, amateur ensembles, and aspiring young talent hoping for a professional career. Check the events listings in the free *City Paper* and the *Washington Post*'s Thursday District section and Friday Weekend section. No one can possibly take them all in, but the sheer abundance of free classical and international performances is one reason devotees make the city their life-long home. In a single week in 2006, you might have joined Washingtonians at a Japanese lute program at the **Arthur M. Sackler Gallery** on the Mall; an Armenian three-stringed fiddle recital at the Kennedy Center's **Millennium Stage**; a Celtic music recital with harp and hammered dulcimer at the Kennedy Center's Millennium Stage; an organ recital at the **Washington National Cathedral**; an ensemble recital of works by Haydn at **Dumbarton House**; a flute recital at the **Church of the Epiphany**; a jazz piano recital at the **Corcoran Gallery of Art**; a vocal recital by baritone and pianist at the **Washington Highlands Branch** of the city library; a piano recital at the **National City Christian Church**; and a fiddle and guitar duo at the **Library of Congress**.

WITH CHESS ACTION

Some of Washington's finest chess players can be seen in action at **Dupont Circle Chess in the Park** (Metro: Dupont Circle), where 10 permanently affixed tables with benches for four are reserved for them. You can watch or, if you think you are good, let the players know you are interested in a match. The George Washington University Chess Club cites the Dupont Circle tables as a recommended training ground for beginners and an excellent way to become acquainted with the Washington chess community. International chess players from Embassy Row are frequently on hand. If you decide to play, the club notes that almost all games are touch-move and you may be playing speed-chess against the clock. It warns members to beware of the occasional hustler: "Don't play for money unless you genuinely think you have good odds of winning." You can catch the matches most weekday evenings and all day Saturday and Sunday from spring through fall, weather permitting.

WITH LAZY DAYS

When we locals have an idle weekend, we don't spend all of it watching football on TV. You will find crowds of us:

- **Browsing the boutiques of Georgetown** (M St. and Wisconsin Ave. NW; K Street Circulator bus). We aren't necessarily intent on buying anything. But we want to be in the know—au courant, in the loop. We want to check out what's new in fashion or in the galleries. We want to bump into friends, maybe to share a beer or a late lunch. We want to see and be seen.
- **Strolling the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal towpath** (Georgetown, Thomas Jefferson St. NW at Lock 4; K St. Circulator bus). The path is wide, the terrain gentle, and after a few minutes you have the Potomac River on the left and the canal on the right. Joggers and bicyclists race past, but most people are out for an easy amble, enjoying the water views and breezes. Take note as you stroll that this invaluable recreational and scenic asset almost became a vehicle parkway. Historic preservation and environmentalism are ongoing issues on Capitol Hill. The canal and towpath, saved from destruction as a national parkland, is a lesson in what the stakes are.

- **Visiting a 19th-century open market** (7th Street and North Carolina Avenue. SE; www.easternmarket.net; Tuesday to Saturday 7am–6pm, Sunday 9am–4pm; Metro: Eastern Market). A Capitol Hill institution and neighborhood town center since 1873, it is the last of Washington's 19th-century markets to remain in continuous operation. Daily except Monday, you will find vendors marketing meats, seafood, baked goods, flowers, and produce. On weekends, farmers show up to display their produce. Every Saturday there's a crafts fair (10 am–5pm) and on Sunday a flea market draws the bargain hunters (10am–5pm). For more substantial fare, join the Saturday breakfast line of neighborhood residents at the counter of The Market Lunch (Tuesday to Saturday 7:30am–10:55am). The blueberry and the chocolate chip pancakes ($4.50) top the menu. This is small-town America in the heart of the nation's capital. The term "Inside the Beltway" tends to be derogatory and often is used to mean a place where people have lost touch with reality. Take in Saturday morning at Eastern Market, and you'll see we're not really all that weird.

AT AFTER-WORK HAPPY HOURS

Mostly the realm of young and unattached professionals, the 5 to 7pm happy hour at downtown bars and pubs is a thriving segment of the local social whirl. Every big city has a happy hour, but in Washington it's an important part of the workday. Sure, it's a pick-up opportunity, but it's also one way for singles in high-pressure jobs to let off steam, get to know their co-workers, or maybe to network (an always important activity in the nation's capital). If they are newly employed from out of town, as many are, they may be looking to build a family of friends over a brew or two. Many places cut drink prices and provide free nibbles to attract the 20- and 30-something crowds. Thursday has become the best night of the week for deals. If this is your milieu, join in. Among the popular and affordable happy hour choices:

- **The Front Page Restaurant & Grill** (1333 New Hampshire Ave. NW; ☎ 202/296-6500; www.frontpagerestaurant.com; Metro: Dupont Circle). A bustling Dupont Circle watering hole for 2 decades, it sports a newspaper theme and a rustic heavy wood and brick decor that gives it a comfy ambiance. Happy hour is nightly, but from 5 to 7pm on Thursday, Corona and Miller Lite go for $2 a bottle; at the taco bar, you get three for a buck.
- **Lucky Bar** (1221 Connecticut Ave. NW; ☎ 202/331-3733; www.luckybardc.com; Metro: Dupont Circle). Meet the bike messengers, the muscular crew that threads city traffic to hand-deliver important documents demanding immediate attention. Cheap food and drinks are what draw them to this Dupont Circle hangout, now a decade old. Students, interns, and soccer fans congregate here too. *GQ* magazine dubbed the Lucky one of the 10 best soccer bars in America in 2006. At Thursday's happy hour, the American standards—Budweiser and Bud Lite—go for $2 a bottle.
- **Hawk 'n' Dove** (329 Pennsylvania Ave. NW; ☎ 202/543-3300; www.hawkanddoveonline.com; Metro: Capitol South). On Capitol Hill, this big noisy bar—which claims to be the oldest Irish bar in town—has been drawing Capitol staffers since 1967. So the story goes, it's a place where the folks who

do the real work, Democrat and Republican alike, gather to gripe about their bosses. To preserve their jobs, they refer to the senator or representative who employs them only as "my member" should anyone be eavesdropping. In 2006, *The Washington Post* included the Hawk 'n' Dove in its regional list of 14 "perfect dives—local bars with grit and personality on tap." Happy hour specials are offered nightly; on Thursday, Bud Ice goes for $2 a bottle.

GALLERY HOPPING ON FIRST FRIDAY

Washington is home to artists and artisans from around the world, so the art scene is quite active. Visit the galleries; maybe talk to the artists. The most convenient way is to participate in First Friday. More than 25 **Dupont Circle art galleries** (Metro: Dupont Circle) host a free open house from 5 to 8pm on the first Friday of every month. Many serve food and wine; often a musician is on hand to serenade; and some decorate with lanterns to provide a festive look. Washington arts lovers move from gallery to gallery, mingling and meeting, and so can you. Most galleries are located in close proximity on Connecticut Avenue and on R Street NW. The works are varied. The **Washington Printmakers Gallery** (1732 Connecticut Ave. NW), displays etchings, aquatints, and lithographs. **Studio Gallery** (2108 R St. NW) is the city's oldest cooperative gallery with diverse shows. The **Burdick Gallery of Inuit Art** (2114 R St. NW) features sculptures and prints by Canadian Inuit artists. **Gallery K** (2010 R St. NW) focuses on contemporary art. The quality of works generally is first rate, but prices can be high because of the city's high cost of living. Go to browse, people-watch, and, maybe, find a bargain. For a list of participants, pick up a free copy of *Galleries Magazine* in any gallery. A list of many Dupont Circle galleries also can be found at www.artlineplus.com.

AT FOREIGN CULTURAL CENTER PROGRAMS

Many foreign nationals, perhaps assigned to work in their homeland embassy, call Washington home, at least temporarily. Several countries sponsor cultural centers, where American citizens can meet people from abroad and learn about them and their native land. Lectures, concerts, and art shows are among the programs presented. Many are free.

In a single week in 2006, you could have attended a lecture on the Japanese American Internment Experience at the **Japan Information and Culture Center** (1155 21st St. NW; ☎ 202/238-6949; www.embjapan.org/jicc; Metro: Dupont Circle); heard a lecture on Palestinian negotiations at the **Palestine Center** (2425 Virginia Ave. NW; ☎ 202/338-1290; www.palestinecenter.org; Metro: Foggy Bottom); viewed an exhibit of opera costumes and sketches for Wagner's "Das Rheingold" and "Die Walkre" at Germany's **Goethe-Institut** (812 7th St. NW; ☎ 202/289-1200; www.goethe.de/washington; Metro: Gallery Place-Chinatown); and studied works by children's illustrators at **Meridian International Center** (1630 Crescent Place NW; ☎ 202/667-6800; www.meridian.org; Metro: Dupont Circle), an American organization sponsoring cultural exchanges. Look for current listings in the free Thursday *City Paper.*

Other cultural centers regularly organizing events include:

- **Alliance Francaise** (2142 Wyoming Ave. NW; ☎ 202/234-7911; www.francedc.org; Metro: Dupont Circle). It hosts French wine and cheese tasting sessions, films, art exhibits, recitals, and lectures.
- **Asia Society, Washington Center** (1575 I St. NW, Suite 325; ☎ 202/833-2742; www.asiasociety.org/visit; Metro: Farragut North). Founded to foster understanding between more than 30 Asian nations and the United States, the organization sponsors about 50 public programs annually on contemporary affairs, trade and investment, and arts and cultures. President George W. Bush addressed the group in 2006. You don't need to be a member to attend many functions.
- **Brazilian-American Cultural Institute** (4719 Wisconsin Ave. NW; ☎ 202/362-8334; www.bacidc.org/us; Metrobus: [30], [32], [34], [35], or [36]). Concerts, movies, art shows, and samba lessons.
- **Instituto de Mexico en Washington, D.C.** (2829 16th St. NW; ☎ 202/728-1628; http://embassyofmexico.org; Metrobus: [S2] or [S4]). Occupying a beautiful mansion, the institute presents a year-round program of films, art shows, concerts, and lectures.

7 Outdoor Washington

Parks, active pursuits, and major league teams

WASHINGTON IS CALLED A CITY OF MOVERS AND SHAKERS, AND THIS APPLIES not only to work-day achievements but equally to off hours. Local folk really do move, pursuing athletics of all sorts with remarkable vigor. Home town puffery, you think? Not at all. Let me cite a fairly creditable source agreeing with me, *Men's Health Magazine.* In an article headlined "Is Your Town Couch-bound?" (September 2005), it rated Washington as America's No. 1 city for active residents based on "how many people jog, cycle, swim, or play a sport." One reason, it noted, is because so much of the city—nearly one-fifth—is devoted to parks, more than in any other major city, according to statistics the magazine cites from the Trust for Public Land. A city that plays sports apparently also likes to watch them. Fans in the Metropolitan Region support major league baseball, football, basketball (men's and women's), hockey, and soccer teams. This chapter is a guide to spectator sports and to recreational activities and the parks in which to enjoy them. I've divided the city's parks into two categories—places where you can run, hike, bike, or otherwise maintain your aerobic schedule and places where you simply can relax, enjoy the setting, and watch the passersby.

OUTDOOR SPACES FOR ACTIVE PEOPLE

Washington is the center of a metropolitan area that now claims a population of more than 5 million. But in the city itself you won't really feel like you're being crushed by the crowds. The reason is its abundance of green spaces—parks and playing fields—many of them conveniently located adjacent to the National Mall or not far away. These are the major outdoor spaces, which those of us who live here value highly.

PARKS ON OR NEAR THE MALL

Two miles long and 5 blocks wide, the vast green expanse of the **National Mall** ★★★ (☎ 202/426-6841; www.nps.gov/nama; Metro: Smithsonian; daily until midnight) gives downtown Washington plenty of needed breathing room. Its gravel paths attract runners and strollers throughout the day; its green lawns teem with Frisbee tossers. In spring, the annual Kite Festival, traditionally a part of the

National Cherry Blossom Festival, fills the sky with dancing color (see "Events" Chapter 12, p. 281). For more on the Mall itself (see Chapter 5, p. 84).

An adjunct of the Mall, **West Potomac Park** ✯ (On the Mall; ☎ 202/426-6841; www.nps.gov/nama; Metro: Smithsonian; daily during daylight hours) is a sports playground with great Potomac River views. Administered by the National Park Service, it is tucked between the Tidal Basin on the east and the Lincoln Memorial on the west. Go here to watch or join pickup soccer, softball, rugby, field hockey, and lacrosse matches. Once exciting, full-fledged polo matches, galloping horses and all, were staged on its broad grass-covered fields, but sadly they have disappeared in recent years.

Enjoy inexpensive golf and tennis close to your hotel at **East Potomac Park** ✯ (Adjacent to the Mall; ☎ 202/426-6841; www.nps.gov/nama; Metro: Smithsonian; daily during daylight hours). Located just east of the Tidal Basin and the Jefferson Memorial, the park is all but hidden by the complex of vehicle and railroad bridges linking Washington with Virginia across the Potomac River. From behind the Jefferson Memorial, follow Ohio Drive (on foot or bicycle) past the George Mason Memorial. This will get you under the bridges and into this large and lovely peninsula jutting into the Potomac. Run, bike, or stroll the 3.2-mile loop around the peninsula with water and monument views every step of the way. At Hains Point, the tip of the peninsula, check out the massive sculpture called *The Awakening*. The head and hands of a giant male figure arise from beneath the ground. (For details on golf and tennis, see p. 172.)

Go for a pleasant stroll around the pond at **Constitution Gardens** ✯✯ (On the Mall; ☎ 202/426-6841; www.nps.gov/nama; Metro: Smithsonian; daily during daylight hours). Unlike the two Potomac parks, this 45-acre green space is formally landscaped; it's a quiet place of shaded walks. In one corner, the Vietnam Veteran's Memorial is its most noted attraction. Nearby, a footbridge leads to a little island in the pond where you find a small memorial to the **56 Signers of the Declaration of Independence.**

No way you can see it all, but take a look at a bit of one of the country's most unusual parks. Beginning in the heart of Georgetown, the **Chesapeake and Ohio Canal National Historic Park** ✯✯ (Rock Creek Parkway at 28th and K sts. NW; ☎ 202/653-5190; www.nps.gov/choh; Metro: Foggy Bottom–GWU; daily during daylight hours) stretches northwest for 185 miles alongside the Potomac River to Cumberland, Maryland. Built between 1828 and 1850, the canal served until 1924 as an important shipping route between the farms in the West and the factories in the East. Mules towed the barges, treading the tow path that parallels the canal. Barge captains and their families lived their entire lives on the canal, and lock tenders operated the 74 lift locks that carried the barges from near sea level to an elevation of 605 feet. A few stone structures that housed the tenders still stand. As a west-bound barge glided up to a lock, the tender closed two giant swinging doors behind it. This enclosed the barge in a mostly watertight chamber. Then the tender pumped water into the chamber, lifting the barge like an elevator to the next level. Then the tender opened the lock's forward doors, and the barge moved on. The park preserves the canal and many of its structures. A small visitor center on the canal in **Georgetown** (1057 Thomas Jefferson St. NW, between 30th and 31st sts. south of M Street) tells the historic story. For the first

A Museum of Plants

The lush, intimidating look of the tropics is on display in Jungle, a major exhibit of the **U.S. Botanic Garden** ★ kids (On the Mall at Maryland Avenue and 1st Street SW; ☎ 202/225-8333; Metro: Federal Center SW or Capital South; www.usbg.gov; free admission; daily except Dec 25 10am–5pm). One of the oldest botanic gardens in North America, this museum of plants from around the world crams a lot of nature into its lofty glass-domed greenhouse. Breathe in the fragrance of a gallery devoted entirely to orchids. Walk through the **Desert,** a sun-baked landscape of exotic and prickly cacti. Learn about medicinal plants from around the world. And explore the **Jungle**, designed to simulate a tropical rainforest soaring above an abandoned and decaying plantation. It's the sort of spooky setting that delights youngsters. Trees shoot up three stories beneath the glass. Afterwards, introduce Junior or his sister to home gardening in the **Children's Garden.** It's an open courtyard within the Conservatory, furnished with a playhouse, potting bench, garden tools, and, usually, a potted plant or two to transplant. **Bartholdi Park,** just across Independence Avenue, features a demonstration garden for home landscapers. At the Conservatory entrance, see the eye-catching First Ladies Water Garden in the new, 3-acre **National Garden** that debuted in September 2006. The latest addition to the Mall also features a formal rose garden; a terraced butterfly garden; and a display of rare native trees, shrubs, grasses, and flowers from the Mid-Atlantic region.

mile, the canal and towpath edge past homes and shops in an urban parklike setting, and then they start their long climb through the green countryside. Many hikers and bicyclists travel the full length over a period of several days, camping in the park or staying in motels and inns adjacent to it. However, day hikers tend to turn back at Fletcher's Boathouse at the 3-mile point (water, snacks, and restrooms). For details on seasonal barge rides, see Chapter 5 (p. 137).

PARKS AWAY FROM THE MALL AREA

Unless visitors go to the National Zoo, they often miss **Rock Creek Park** ★ (☎ 202/895-6070; www.nps.gov/rocr; daily during daylight hours). Though it covers more than 1,700 acres within the District of Columbia and virtually cuts the city in half from north to south, most of the park is tucked away in residential neighborhoods. President John Quincy Adams delighted in roaming the woods before it became a park; he called it "a romantic glen," where he could listen "to the singing of a thousand birds." Still a semi-wilderness of forest and meadow (coyotes have been spotted since 2004; deer are everywhere), the park begins at the Potomac River, opposite the Watergate complex in the 2600 block of Virginia Avenue NW. Initially it is draped across a slender gorge cut by Rock

Creek. But the green spaces widen as it winds north for about 15 miles to the Maryland border (Western Avenue NW) at Chevy Chase. The Zoo (see Chapter 5, p. 114), located within the park, is near the southern tip. Also, **ranger-led programs** kids focusing on aspects of nature and the park are scheduled regularly at the Nature Center. Many are aimed specifically at children. To reach the Nature Center, take Metro to the Friendship Heights station and transfer to the E2 Metrobus. Get off at the intersection of Glover and Military roads NW, and walk south on the trail up the hill (about 100 yds.). Free and ticketed outdoor concerts and theater productions are presented in the summer at the park's Carter Barron Amphitheatre (16th Street and Colorado Avenue NW), but it is advisable to attend only if you can go by car. Keep in mind you will be competing for limited seating with Washingtonians who live in the neighborhood.

It's hard to believe, but almost in the city's heart is a 91-acre near-wilderness where you can find escape from urban hubbub—Theodore Roosevelt Island in the Potomac River. This peaceful retreat is the site of the **Theodore Roosevelt Memorial** ★ kids (On the Potomac River at the Virginia end of the Theodore Roosevelt Memorial Bridge; ☎ 703/289-2500; www.nps.gov/this; Metro: Rosslyn and a 20-min. walk; free admission; daily dawn to dusk). Preserving forest, marsh, and swamp, the island was dedicated in 1967 to America's 26th president as a memorial recognizing his love of nature. Two and a half miles of island trails invite easy hikes. In the center, a 17-foot-high statue of Roosevelt soars to tree-top height. To some, the statue is an intrusion on the semi-wilderness. It does seem out of place, as if it had tumbled from a truck hauling it to a more fitting location on the Mall. Still, I think Roosevelt would approve. From the Rosslyn Metro station: After exiting, turn left on Moore Street and go to the end of the block. Turn right on 19th Street and go one short block to Lynn Street. Cross Lynn and turn left. In two more blocks you will see a sign to the **Mount Vernon Trail.** Follow the trail to the island. The island is at the northern end of the Mount Vernon Trail, an 18.5-mile paved trail that winds south along the Potomac River to George Washington's Mount Vernon Plantation.

Is it a park, a garden, or a museum? Take your pick, because the **United States National Arboretum** ★ (3501 New York Ave. NE; ☎ 202/245-2726; www.usna.usda.gov; Metro: Union Station, connecting to Metrobus X6 on weekends only; free admission; daily except Dec 25 8am–5pm) qualifies on all three counts. Covering 450 rolling acres along the Anacostia River, the arboretum is, indeed, a living museum where trees, shrubs, and herbaceous plants are cultivated for scientific and educational purposes. The result is a beautifully landscaped garden in nearly constant bloom from early spring to early winter. My quandary is whether the arboretum should be listed in this guide as an "outdoor space for active people" or a "park for the not so active." Since it could be either, I've sandwiched it between the chapter sections.

Active: Many local folks enjoy bicycling or hiking its 9 miles of paved roads. More unpaved hiking trails explore groves of trees and sloping meadows.

Not so active: You can explore the arboretum by car or climb aboard a 48-passenger tram for a 35-minute escorted tour. The tram operates weekends and holidays from early April to mid-October. Departures are 11:30am and 1, 2, 3, and 4pm. There is a fee: $4 adults, $3 seniors, $2 children (4–16).

Perched on one of Washington's highest points, the arboretum has been landscaped into numerous gardens. The **Azalea Collection** draws visitors in the spring, when thousands of bushes turn the park's Mount Hamilton into a blaze of color. Mid-autumn is the season for the 13-acre **Asian Collection's** camellias clinging to steeply sloping terrain. Don't miss the **National Grove of State Trees,** a 30-acre woodland featuring the state tree of nearly every state. The District of Columbia is represented by a scarlet oak; California sent (what else?) a California redwood; from Kansas came a cottonwood tree. The **National Herb Garden** is the largest in the country, containing annual, perennial, and woodsy herbal plants.

The **National Bonsai Collection and Penjing Museum,** housed in three large pavilions, is also a must-see. The Japanese art of bonsai is the cultivation of dwarf trees in which the placement of branches, the styling, and even the pot the tree occupies carry deep symbolism. Penjing is the Chinese precursor to bonsai. The bonsai collection began when the Nippon Bonsai Association of Japan donated 53 bonsai to the people of the United States in honor of the 1976 Bicentennial. Since then, the collection has grown to more than 150 plants.

Unfortunately, getting to the arboretum, located on the eastern edge of the city, is inconvenient. By car, take New York Avenue east as if leaving Washington for Baltimore or New York City. It's by far the ugliest gateway to the capital. Turn right onto Bladensburg Road at the traffic light, and go 4 blocks to R Street. Make a left turn on R Street and continue 2 blocks to the arboretum gate. By public transportation, catch the X6 Metrobus from Union Station. With a Metrorail transfer, the fare is 25¢; the return is $1.25. The bus operates only on weekends and holidays; departures from Union Station are every 40 minutes from 7:55am to 4:35pm Return trips from the arboretum are 8:16am to 4:56pm.

OUTDOOR SPACES FOR THE NOT SO ACTIVE

Step into a bit of France and Italy at **Meridian Hill Park** ★★ (16th and W sts. NW; Metrobus [S2] and [S4]; www.nps.gov/rocr/cultural/merid.htm; daily during daylight hours). Laid out in formal design with lots of statuary, the 12-acre park was modeled after the Renaissance and Italian gardens that adorn many of the world's capitals. Begun in 1914, Meridian Hill Park was acquired in 1933 by the National Park Service and completed in 1936. Occupying a slope, it is gently terraced; its most dramatic feature is a series of 13 cascading pools, spilling from one to the next down the hill. Above the pools rides Joan of Arc, as represented by the city's only female equestrian statue. It's a bronze replica of the Paul Dubois work that stands before the Cathedral of Rheims in France. Erected on the Great Terrace, the statue divides the French-influenced upper portion of the park (a long grassy mall) with the lower Italianate portion. President James Buchanan, who spent 4 tumultuous years in the White House prior to the Civil War, is remembered with a less vigorous statue. He is seated, a robe draped across his lap. Befitting the lower park's Italian theme, Dante Alighieri, the 13th-century Italian poet, scholar, and diplomat, stands 11 feet tall in flowing bronze robes. His statue was a gift from an Italian-American newspaper in New York City on behalf of Italian-Americans.

Yes, it's a traffic circle, but a special one. **Dupont Circle** ★ (Intersection of Connecticut, Massachusetts, and New Hampshire aves. NW; Metro: Dupont Circle)

doubles as Washington's friendly back porch, a place where urban dwellers pause for a few minutes to chat with their neighbors. Ringed by park benches, it's a place to sit and read or watch the city flow past. Almost in the city center, it's the focal point of the Dupont Circle/Kalorama neighbor (see Chapter 2, p. 21).

Four other block-size downtown parks with shady trees and benches tempting you to relax are **Lafayette Park** ★★ (opposite the White House, 16th and H sts. NW; Metro: McPherson Square); **Franklin Square** (14th and I sts. NW; Metro: McPherson Square); **McPherson Square** (15th and I sts. NW; Metro: McPherson Square); and **Farragut Square** (17th and I sts. NW; Metro: Farragut North or Farragut West). All are accessible daily until nightfall. Summer concerts, usually some form of rock performed by local artists, interrupt (or relieve, depending on your point of view) the quiet at Farragut Square from noon to 2pm on Thursdays. Note that in late afternoon, many of the city's homeless gather at McPherson Square, where a mobile kitchen provides dinner.

My favorite downtown park, an ideally located rest stop for tired sightseers heading back to their hotels, is little **Pershing Park** ★ (Opposite the White House Visitor Center at 15th Street and Pennsylvania Avenue NW; Metro: Federal Triangle; daily during daylight hours). A sunken retreat, its shade trees tempt you down its terraced sides to below street level, at least partially hiding busy Pennsylvania Avenue. At the bottom, a large pool nearly half a block square in size suggests (use your imagination here) a lake tucked into a mountain valley. At one end a waterfall cascades down the slope. I'm not sure summer temperatures are any cooler in the park, but it certainly seems like it. In winter, the pool becomes an ice skating rink (p. 172).

THE CITY AS OUTDOOR SCULPTURE GARDEN

If you want to honor a national leader or hero with a statue, where do you put it? In Washington, D.C., of course. As a result, the city is bedecked with statuary, so many in fact, that its many parks, circles, and squares are virtual outdoor sculpture gardens. Keep your eyes open for the ones I list below, or plot a walking tour of your own; they all are situated in locations you are likely to pass on your sightseeing excursions.

Out of hundreds of possibilities, I've spotlighted 10 of artistic, historic, and particular whimsical relevance. The historic statues, those born of the Civil War for example, put a face on names in the history books. If for no other reason, stop for a moment when you pass one of the city's statues and see whom it honors. They all have an interesting story to tell.

For the history behind each statue, I'm indebted to James M. Goode, the former Curator of the Smithsonian "Castle" and author of *The Outdoor Sculpture of Washington, DC,* published in 1974 by the Smithsonian Institution Press. Sadly, little information about individual statues is provided on the site of the statues.

ON CAPITOL HILL

The Civil War's victorious commanding general is honored with one of the city's most important statues, known as the **General Ulysses S. Grant Memorial** ★ kids (Union Square, east end of the Mall in front of the Capitol; Metro: Capitol South). Overlooking the almost lake-size Capitol Reflecting Pool, the bronze portrait of

Grant, who went on to be elected President, sits astride his charger "Cincinnatus." The sculptor, Henry Merwin Shrady, a relative unknown at the time, studied Grant's life mask to get the face correct. The horse used as a model was provided by the New York Police Department. Shrady is said to have turned a water hose on his equine model to observe the ripple of the muscles. On Grant's right (north) is the Cavalry Group, seven horsemen charging onto the battlefield. Critics regard it as one of the most dramatically exciting statues in the country, the horses and their mounts seemingly alive and in full gallop. One horse, however, has fallen and taken his rider down with him. Using a mirror, Shrady sculpted his own face as the rider's. Military posts staged cavalry drills so he could get the troop movements correct. On Grant's left (south) is the Artillery Group, another action-packed tableau depicting three powerful horses pulling a caisson with cannon and three riders. In a brief stroll around the memorial's large marble platform you can sense the courage, tragedy, and chaos of battle. Endorsed by Congress, the statues were dedicated in 1922 on the 100th anniversary of Grant's birth. A military parade marched from the White House down Pennsylvania Avenue to the memorial, where Vice President Calvin Coolidge was among the principal speakers. Sadly, Shrady died two weeks before the ceremony. Note on the Grant statue the single word, GRANT. In 1922, he needed no other identification.

NEAR THE WHITE HOUSE

Leading the long parade of equestrian statuary, **Major General Andrew Jackson** (Lafayette Square; Metro: McPherson Square), or at least his statue, enjoys what may be the most prestigious site for an honoree in Washington—directly across Pennsylvania Avenue from the White House. Over the years, attempts have been made to move Jackson elsewhere, since every other statue in Lafayette Square is a Revolutionary War figure. But Jackson, another general who became President, remains, and has since the dedication in 1853 on the 38th anniversary of the Battle of New Orleans. The work, the first equestrian statue cast in the United States, commemorates the general's victory in the final battle of the War of 1812. He is shown reviewing his troops, his hat raised high in salute, and his horse rearing as if to charge. The sculptor, Clark Mills, was self-taught and, when he got the job, had never seen an equestrian statue. But he had studied European prints of such sculptures and set about establishing America's grasp of the art. A crowd of 15,000 turned out for the dedication; leading the way was President Franklin Pierce and his entire Cabinet. The sculptor, when asked to say a few words, struggled to overcome his emotion but reportedly didn't manage to get out a single utterance.

Although he lost out to Jackson for the prime position in Lafayette Square, **Major General Marquis Gilbert de Lafayette** (Lafayette Square; Metro: McPherson Square) was well compensated by having the entire square named after him. Many visitors hurrying through the park take a glance at Jackson and rush on thinking they have seen Lafayette, the boy general who served as Washington's aide-de-camp at Valley Forge and fought on until the war's end at Yorktown. But the marquis stands heroically in the square's southeast corner, one of four Revolutionary War leaders each occupying a different corner. (The others are Generals Thaddeus Kosciusko, Friedrich Wilhelm von Steuben, and Comte Jean de Rochambeau, all

JFK to the Rescue

Directly across from the White House, Lafayette Square is a 7-acre park lined by attractive row houses that give the park its 19th-century flavor. In the 1960s, those houses were threatened by demolition and were destined to be replaced by the 10-story National Courts Building on the east side of the square and the New Executive Office Building on the west side. But President John F. Kennedy opposed the scheme, which would completely change the character of what once was called "the President's Park." Instead, he asked the architectural firm of John Carl Warnecke & Associates to come up with a plan that preserved the square's charm. What emerged was an innovative design that saved the row houses but allowed the construction of the office buildings behind them. At street level, the taller buildings intrude very little on the setting. This "fusion" of old and new has been duplicated elsewhere in Washington and across the country.

foreign imports like Lafayette aiding in the American war.) He is posed atop a tall marble pedestal, dressed as a civilian petitioning the French National Assembly to assist the Americans in their fight for independence. At the pedestal's base, a cloak-draped female figure symbolizing America looks up at him while holding out a sword as if urging him to grasp it and join the fight. The Lafayette statue was unveiled in 1891 to commemorate the service he and his French compatriots provided in the war. Lafayette's full name is quite lengthy, but his officer buddies knew him as Gilbert; thus the statue's official name.

You might want to tote along binoculars to better examine the **General William Tecumseh Sherman Monument** (15th Street and Pennsylvania Avenue NW; Metro: Federal Triangle). It stands on a prominent site where Sherman reportedly reviewed victorious Union troops at the end of the Civil War in 1865. In 1903, the spot, just outside the south White House fence, must have seemed appropriately prestigious for the Union's second most famous general. It's still an excellent location, but new security barriers, sometimes impede access. You can still get to the statue, acclaimed as one of the city's most elaborate, but only after negotiating a maze of fencing. Sherman rests astride his horse, his right hand holding a pair of field binoculars as if ready to view a battle. Horse and rider are placed atop a high pedestal, almost too high for anyone to view clearly; thus the need for your own visual aid. More evocative of the war are four life-size troopers, who stand alone at each corner at the pedestal's base. They represent Infantry, Cavalry, Artillery, and Engineers, all branches of the Union military. They are so realistic, the urge is to step up and ask them about their battlefield experiences. Two other groups of statues about mid-point on the pedestal represent War (two vultures attack the body of a dead soldier) and Peace (a woman and three children). Eight bas-reliefs depict aspects of Sherman's military career, among them his controversial but victorious march through Georgia.

As handsome in bronze as he was in life, **Alexander Hamilton** (15th Street NW at Pennsylvania Avenue NW; Metro: Federal Triangle) stands at the south entrance to the Department of Treasury Building. A heroic general in the Revolutionary War, he served as the country's first Treasury secretary, literally creating the department and guiding the young nation to financial credibility and relative stability. James Earle Fraser, who completed the statue in 1923, was one of America's leading sculptors. He also produced the statue of Albert Gallatin, Hamilton's able successor, which stands at the north entrance to the Treasury building. Hamilton is dressed formally in the 18th-century attire of a gentleman. By most historical accounts, he was a brilliant man, high-spirited, affable, charming, and good looking. Fraser captured these characteristics nicely. President Warren G. Harding presided at the dedication, creating something of a mystery when he mentioned an unidentified donor who provided funds for the work. Newspapers of the day suggested it may have been a woman who wore a veil.

Count Casimer Pulaski (Pennsylvania Avenue and 13th Street NW; Metro: Metro Center) cuts the most dashing figure of any of the city's equestrian subjects, decked out in the ornate uniform of a Polish marshal, a flowing cape draping elegantly from his shoulders. Pulaski's bronze portrait occupies a corner of Freedom Plaza, a venue for official ceremonies, entertainment, and other events sponsored by the government of the City of Washington. So who was this guy who merits such prominent recognition? A Polish nobleman, he began his military career as a Polish freedom fighter, earning the rank of marshal general. But he was inspired by America's fight for independence. He sought the help of Benjamin Franklin, then on diplomatic duty in Paris, and Franklin recommended him to George Washington. His courageous service in the Battle of Brandywine in 1777 prompted Washington to commission him as a brigadier general in the American cavalry. A brilliant commander, respected by his troops, he suffered a fatal wound in the Battle of Savannah in 1779 and died at the age of 31.

The Boy Scout Memorial kids (On the Ellipse at 15th Street between E Street and Constitution Avenue NW; Metro: Federal Triangle) is a natural stop if there are any Boy Scouts, former Scouts, or Scout leaders in your group. But the tribute offered is not to the Scouts themselves but to their parents and others who work on behalf of American youth. Financed by the contributions of Scouts and unveiled in 1964, it is located on the site of the First National Boy Scout Jamboree in Washington in 1937. Unfortunately, the statue has not been a critical success. In the center stands a young Scout in full uniform, hiking boots on his feet, and a walking stick in his hand as he strides off. He looks the ideal Scout, and nobody has a problem with him. But he is greatly overshadowed by the two giant allegorical figures behind him, a male and female only partially clothed in wind-blown drapery. They represent American Manhood and Womanhood. All well and good, except when you see the threesome for the first time, you're apt to wonder why the kid's parents are nearly naked. I mean no disrespect to Scouts—I was one myself—but sometimes sculptors goof.

NEAR THE WORLD WAR II MEMORIAL

Numerous nations have bestowed statues on Washington of their homegrown champions of liberty. Prominent among them is **General Simon Bolivar** (18th Street at C Street and Virginia Avenue NW; Metro: Farragut West), who is credited

with liberating much of South America from Spanish rule. He is represented in bronze with what may be the largest equestrian statue in the world. The designer, Felix W. de Weldon, also sculpted the Iwo Jima Memorial. Bolivar, astride his horse, lifts a sword high above his head. My historical source says he is urging victory. But his formidable gaze is directed at the Art Museum of the Americas and at the rear of the Pan American Union building just beyond. One might easily think, instead, that he is launching a military charge against the two buildings and the Organization of American States, which they house. Around his neck he wears a bronze replica of a gold medal given to him by Lafayette. The statue, erected in 1959, was a gift of Venezuela, one of the countries Bolivar liberated.

PENN QUARTER

At first glance, **The Temperance Fountain** (Pennsylvania Avenue at 7th Street NW; Metro: Archives-Navy Memorial) is a puzzler, an endearing oddity that amuses the locals and befuddles visitors. It stands on one of the most prominent corners along Washington's ceremonial avenue, the route of the Inaugural parades from the Capitol to the White House. The structure resembles a small temple, its canopy supported by four granite pillars, one at each corner. Beneath it is a pair of entwined dolphins, their rear flippers lifted rakishly in the air. Atop the canopy, an elegant water crane on stilt-like legs silently observes the daily hubbub around him. The impish dolphins once spouted drinking water. A San Francisco dentist, Henry Cogswell, gave the fountain to the city so people could quench their thirst with water rather than alcohol. A man who made his fortune in the California gold rush, Cogswell donated similar fountains to other cities in the 1870s and 1880s, but most have been removed. A U.S. senator once tried to convince Congress to get rid of the one in Washington. He's long gone, but the fountain is still here.

RECREATIONAL SPORTS

If you need a break from the museums of the Mall, don your athletic gear and get outdoors. I describe a variety of ways to stretch your muscles.

ON FOOT Sometimes it seems as if the whole city is toting up the miles on a morning, noon, or evening run. President Bill Clinton was occasionally spotted on Washington pathways leading his security detail on a merry chase until knee problems sidelined him to his bicycle. President George W. Bush also runs regularly, maintaining a creditable speed for a non-racer. On your first visit to the city, **run along the Mall** ★★, simply for the thrill of running in the shadow of the White House, U.S. Capitol, Washington Monument, and other memorials. You won't find as historic a running trail anywhere else in the country. If you want company when you run, join the 5-mile Fun Run organized at 9am every Sunday by **Fleet Feet Sports** (1841 Columbia Rd. NW; ☎ 202/387-3888; www.fleetfeetdc.com; Metro: Woodley Park–Zoo/Adams Morgan). You will get an on-the-run tour of the intriguing, international Adams Morgan neighborhood.

The quietest, least urban trail is the towpath of the **Chesapeake and Ohio Canal** ★★, which runs uninterrupted (if you're up to it) 185 miles west alongside the Potomac River to Cumberland, Maryland. The gravel towpath begins on

the Georgetown waterfront, a few steps from the Thompson Boat Center at the west end of Virginia Avenue NW. You can reach it from the Mall via the Lincoln Memorial and the Kennedy Center. Water and restrooms are available at the 3-mile point. I trained for the Marine Corps Marathon on the towpath, running 9 miles out and then doubling back. Running here involves all pluses and no negatives.

ON WHEELS Two-wheeled touring is a great way to recover from museum overdose. Rent bicycles at **Thompson Boat Center** (2900 Virginia Ave. NW, on the Potomac River at the intersection of Rock Creek Parkway and Virginia Avenue in Georgetown; ☎ 202/333-9543; www.thompsonboatcenter.com; Metro: Foggy Bottom–GWU), a National Park Service concessionaire. The bike rental center is open from 8am to 6pm daily from mid-March through September. All-terrain bikes (21-speed) rent for $8 an hour or $25 a day. But who needs them? Unless you are bicycling up Embassy Row, the terrain is mostly flat. Single-speed cruisers are $4 an hour or $15 a day.

From the center, cycle the nearly level towpath of the **Chesapeake and Ohio Canal** ★★, passing a number of canal locks. For strong of leg, a prime destination is Great Falls on the Potomac, 14 miles one way, where you will find an impressive waterfall and a visitor center with restrooms and water.

Or point your way down river, following the 19-mile **Mount Vernon Trail** ★★ south from the Virginia side of Arlington Memorial Bridge to George Washington's Mount Vernon Plantation. This is a paved trail, mostly paralleling the Potomac and occasionally bridging marshlands. I've bicycled both many times; they can get busy on weekends, but either is worth the effort.

ON THE WATER See the river; get on the river. It's a great way to cool off and still take in those historic Washington views. When I lived in Foggy Bottom, I often was on the water at least once a week. **Thompson Boat Center** (see "On Wheels" above) rents two-person canoes, singles and doubles kayaks, and (if you are properly certified) rowing shells and Sunfish sailboats. Navigate **upriver** past Georgetown to Fletcher's Cove; **down river** to Arlington Memorial Bridge at the Lincoln Memorial and **across the river and around Theodore Roosevelt Island.** Haul out your vessel and tour the island. The distance from Memorial Bridge to the cove, the area to which renters are restricted, is about 3.5 miles—lengthy enough to satisfy most recreational paddlers. Remember, the Potomac is a powerful river, and the current is strong. If you paddle down river, save your strength for the return. Rentals are available from 8am to 5pm. The season begins when the water temperature reaches 55°; it ceases at the end of October. A canoe for two rents for $8 an hour, $22 a day; a singles kayak, $8 an hour, $24 a day; doubles kayak, $10 an hour, $30 a day; single racing/recreational shells, $13 an hour; double racing shells, $26 an hour; sailboats, $10 an hour.

ON A PADDLE BOAT Paddling a canoe on the Potomac is muscle work. Pedaling a paddleboat on the Tidal Basin is, well, for softies. But fun, and something you can do as a couple or with the kids. Yes, they're called paddleboats, but you pedal to propel them across the water. Check in at the dock for **Tidal Basin Paddle Boats** ★ (☎ 202/479-2426; www.tidalbasinpaddleboats.com), located

just north of the Jefferson Memorial on the Mall. Boats are rented 10am to 5pm daily from March 15 through Labor Day; from Labor Day until Columbus Day Weekend, Wednesday to Sunday. A two-passenger boat rents for $8 an hour; for four passengers, $16 an hour. At least one passenger must be 16 years old. Anyone who fits into a life vest can ride in a boat.

ON HORSEBACK Saddle up and ride through Rock Creek Park, a 1,700-acre woodlands that stretches from the Potomac River north to the Maryland state line. Slicing through the heart of residential Washington, it's the National Park Service's oldest urban park, dating back to 1890. The **Rock Creek Park Horse Center** (5100 Glover Rd.; ☎ 202/362-0117; www.rockcreekhorsecenter.com) schedules hour-long guided rides alongside splashing Rock Creek 5 days a week. Rides are held Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday at l:30pm and on Saturday and Sunday at noon, 1:30, and 3pm. The cost is $30 per person; reservations are required; and 12 is the minimum age. Kiddies at least 30 inches in height can go for a 15-minute pony ride ($20) on Saturday and Sunday. To reach the Horse Center, take Metrorail to the Friendship Heights station. Transfer to the E2 Metrobus line, which runs east toward the park along Military Road, Missouri Avenue, and Riggs Road. Get off at the intersection of Glover Road (also called Oregon Avenue) and walk south on the trail up the hill to the park's Nature Center (about 100 yd.).

ON ICE SKATES Once the cold weather sets in, two open-air ice-skating rinks add a jolly note to downtown DC. The largest and prettiest is the **National Sculpture Garden Ice-Skating Rink** ★ (☎ 202/289-3360; www.nga.gov/ginfo/skating.shtm), located right on the Mall between the National Museum of Natural History and the National Gallery of Art. The rink occupies what in other seasons is a large fountain and pool. It's open daily and evenings; rentals, snack service, and restrooms are available. A few blocks west, the **Pershing Park Ice Skating Rink** ★ (15th Street and Constitution Avenue NW; ☎ 202/737-6938 in season) neighbors the White House. It too is open daily and evenings; rentals, snack service, and restrooms are available. Both schedule 2-hour sessions; adults $6.50, children $5.50. Skate rental is $2.50 with a form of ID.

ON THE COURTS Two large public tennis complexes welcome visitors, although reservations usually are necessary. The **East Potomac Tennis Center** (East Potomac Park; ☎ 202/554-5962; www.eastpotomactennis.com; 7am–10pm daily) provides 24 courts—10 clay and 14 hard—and offers lighted night play. The facility is located at Hains Point at the tip of the park; flag a taxi to get there, and call for a pickup when your match is over. A hard court is $8 an hour; clay, $15. The **Rock Creek Park Tennis Center** (16th and Kennedy sts. NW; ☎ 202/722-5949; www.rockcreektennis.com; daily 7am–11pm) maintains 25 outdoor tennis courts—10 hard and 15 clay—and five indoor courts during the winter. From downtown, catch the S2 or S4 Metrobus north on 16th Street to Kennedy Street.

ON THE LINKS It's not California's famed Pebble Beach, but visitors can get in a round of golf with great water views at the **East Potomac Golf Courses** (Ohio Drive at Hains Point; ☎ 202/554-7660; www.golfdc.com; daily except Dec

25 6:30am–6pm), a 10-minute taxi ride from most downtown hotels. And, in contrast to Pebble Beach's exorbitant rates, greens fees here range from a piddling $9 to $15 for 9 holes and $22 to $27 for 18 holes. Golf cart rental is $22 for 18 holes; rental clubs, $12. Three courses and a driving range comprise the golf complex; the Red and White courses each offer nine holes and the Blue course boasts an 18-hole (6,303-yd.) championship course. **Rock Creek Golf Course** (16th and Rittenhouse sts. NW; ☎ 202/882-7332; www.golfdc.com; daily except Dec 25 6:30am to dusk) features another bargain-priced 18 holes in a lush park setting. The rate for nine holes is $15 to $18; for 18 holes, $20 to $25. Cart rental is $13 per person for 18 holes. Club rental, $12 for 18 holes. Catch the S2 or S4 Metrobus north from K Street on 16th Street to Rittenhouse.

ON THE LANES Recently opened in bustling Penn Quarter, **Lucky Strike Lanes** (701 7th St. NW; ☎ 292/347-1021; www.bowlluckystrike.com; Metro: Gallery Place–Chinatown; daily 11am–2am) is one of the city's hip new places to bowl. You'll find 14 lanes, three pool tables, and three big-screen TVs. The rate is $4.95 to $7.95 a game per person. Shoe rental is $3.95. This is not your typical strip mall alley; Penn Quarter is an upscale neighborhood dotted with luxury condos, and Lucky Strike Lanes reflects this.

SPECTATOR SPORTS

Athletic or not, Washingtonians are big sports fans, supporting six professional teams. You can catch one or more of them almost any time of the year.

BASEBALL

In 2005, Washington got its first baseball team in 34 years. The **Washington Nationals** ★ (RFK Stadium, 2400 East Capitol St. SE; ☎ 888/632-6287 for ticket purchase; www.nationals.com; Metro: Stadium–Armory; Apr–Oct; AE, MC, V) made a strong debut its first season, drawing throngs of sports-starved fans to RFK Stadium. Now refurbished, the old stadium was home to the Washington Senators team until it packed up and moved to Texas in 1971. The new Nationals came from Montreal, where they were the struggling Montreal Expos, a team created in 1969. In spring of 2006, ground breaking ceremonies inaugurated construction of a new $611 million ballpark as part of a redevelopment project of the neighborhood south of the U.S. Capitol. By contract, it is supposed to be completed in time for the 2008 season. As the Nationals build a following, ballpark sellouts are rare. Single tickets in the lofty top rows generally are $7 per person, except for select "premium" games when they cost $12; the price climbs in easy stages to $45 (and then jumps to more than $100) as you get closer to the action. But for you bargain hunters, the team's new owners announced during the summer 2006 season that the price of 1,000 upper deck tickets would drop to $3 and another 1,000 would go for $5. It's an effort to boost lagging attendance. (To avoid box office lines, buy tickets online and print them out.)

BASKETBALL

Back-to-back playoff appearances of the home National Basketball Association team in 2005 and 2006 have sparked hope for Washington basketballs fans. As a result they have been turning out in impressive numbers to watch the **Washington**

Wizards (Verizon Center, 601 F St. NW; ☎ 202/661-5050; www.washingtonwizards.com; Metro: Gallery Place-Chinatown; Nov–Apr; AE, MC, V). Until 1997, the team was known as the Washington Bullets, an unfortunate name for a city with troubling crime statistics at the time. The team was born as the Chicago Packers in 1961, moved on to Baltimore for a few years, and landed in the nation's capital in 1974. After a string of losing years, the play-off appearances sparked nearly a dozen home game sellouts and almost as many near sellouts at the 20,000-seat Verizon Center during the 2006 season. The Wizards played 41 home games in 2006. A limited number of cheap seats, located at the top of the arena behind the baskets, go for $10 per person, and you get what you pay for. Still, they sell out fast when put up for sale, usually a month before the game. For January games, for example, check on availability early in December. The next cheapest seats are $40, and prices climb to more than $100. To be assured of a lower price, buy online in advance.

Summer visitors can enjoy basketball, too. Soon after the Wizards end their season in spring, the women take to the same Verizon Center court for much of the summer. The Women's National Basketball Association team is represented locally by the **Washington Mystics** (Verizon Center, 601 F St. NW; ☎ 202/266-2200; www.washingtonmystics.com; Metro: Gallery Place–Chinatown; May to mid-Aug; AE, MC, V). The team ended its sixth season in 2004 as a semifinalist for the league championship, endearing themselves to Washington hoop fans—at least for awhile. The Mystics play 17 home games, and walk-up tickets at the box office should be readily available. The cheap seats, high and behind the baskets, go for $10 per person. Better seats are $19 to $30 per person.

FOOTBALL

Washington goes wild every season for the **Washington Redskins** (FedEx Field; ☎ 301/276-6060; www.redskins.com; Aug–Dec). Taking in a game is the social thing to do for the well-heeled and the well-connected. Everybody else catches it on TV. In years past, the Redskins have been National Football League Super Bowl champs, but not recently. Still the fans pay big bucks and undergo incredible traffic jams to watch in person at Fed Ex Field in suburban Prince Georges County, Maryland. Most home game seats go to season ticket holders, and they have sold out annually since 1966; there's a long waiting list to buy. Your chance of scoring a single ticket is next to nil, and the cost places an afternoon at a game in the big-splurge category. But if you really, really want to go: Some tickets are set aside for the visiting team; if these don't sell out, the visitors return them to the Fed Ex Field Box Office. (See phone number above.) Typically, this occurs the Thursday before a Sunday game. Of course, every Redskin fan knows this, and priority goes to fans on the waiting list to buy season tickets, so good luck. Prices (when available) range from $30 to $110 per person. The Redskins play 10 home games, including two in the preseason. To reach Fed Ex Field (lucky you), take Metrorail to the Landover Metro Station. From there, shuttle buses make the run to the stadium ($5 round-trip). Shuttles begin operating 2 hours before the 1pm game time and run until 2 hours after the game. Oh yes, there's one more (expensive) way to snag a ticket. Go to the StubHub link (www.stubhub.com) on the Redskins web page. StubHub is a major ticket clearing house where any ticket holder can put a Redskins ticket up for sale.

HOCKEY

Hockey is the third major sport to make use of the conveniently located and always busy Verizon Center. In Washington, the National Hockey League is represented by the **Washington Capitals** (Verizon Center; 601 F St. NW; ☎ 202/397-7328 for tickets; 202/266-2200 for executive offices; www.washingtoncaps.com; Metro: Gallery Place–Chinatown; Sept–Apr; AE, MC, V), a division winner in the 1999–2000 season and perennial contender for the Stanley Cup. The team first took to the ice in 1974–75. Getting a ticket at the door isn't a problem. The cheap seats in the goal zone are $22.

MEN'S RUGBY

The Washington area has become one of the main sources for rugby talent in the country. Embassy staffers from Europe, where rugby got its start in 19th-century England, formed clubs, stirring local interest. Now nearly a dozen teams are fielded during the fall-to-spring season. I'm featuring the **Washington Renegades** (Stead Field, 17th and P sts. NW; www.dcrugby.com; Metro: Dupont Circle) because of their convenient downtown practice field. After a match, teams and spectators head for a nearby pub.

MARINE CORPS MARATHON

It's your choice, spectator or participant? An annual event for more than 3 decades, the **Marine Corps Marathon** ★ (☎ 800/RUN-USMC; www.marinemarathon.com; fee $94; AE, MC, V) attracts thousands of spectators and runners alike. TV talk show host Oprah Winfrey completed the 26.2-mile loop through downtown Washington in 1994. I did it in 1995. In 2005, more than 19,000 participants earned a finisher's medal. Held on a Sunday morning in late October (the date varies), the race is almost as exciting for the folks who line the route from beginning to end. The winners complete the course in under 2½ hours; the laggards trail by 3 or 4 hours more. As a spectator, you can admire the athletes' stamina and cheer on the determined plodders. The race begins just south of the Iwo Jima Statue at the north end of **Arlington National Cemetery** (Metro: Rosslyn). It ends back at the statue, which is perched at the top of a small hill. For many runners, that hill seems almost like Mount Everest. The route streaks through Georgetown, tackles a part of Rock Creek Park, and covers much of the Mall.

SOCCER

Since the debut of major league soccer in 1996, **DC United** (RFK Stadium, 2400 East Capitol St.; ☎ 202/587-5000; www.dcunited.com; Metro: Stadium–Armory; Apr–Oct; AE, MC, V) has garnered more domestic and international awards than any other American team. It took the Major League Soccer Cup championship in 1996, the club's debut year, and again in 1997, 1999, and 2004. Washington's large soccer-hungry international community has sparked loyal fans. DC United plays 16 home games. You can buy tickets online (see above), but you will pay extra for mailing and service fees. Save bucks and buy at the gate; you should have no problem scoring a ticket unless a championship is in question. Depending on the game, single tickets range from $10 to $35 and $16 to $40. Youth (18 and under) and student rates (with ID) are $8 to $25.

Gay and Lesbian Athletic Events

Washington has a large gay and lesbian community, which has formed an impressive network of athletic teams and clubs. Events are listed weekly in the "Community Calendar" of *Metro Weekly,* a free magazine distributed citywide in news boxes. Out-of-towners are welcome at most.

- Go rowing with the **D.C. Strokes Rowing Club** (www.dcstrokes.org), the oldest gay and lesbian rowing club in the United States. Recreational row (weather permitting): 6 to 7:30pm Monday, Wednesday, and Thursday.
- Play waterpolo with the **Washington Wetskins** (www.wetskins.org), the longest continuously operating water polo team in the United States to openly welcome individuals who identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual, or straight. Practice: Wednesday 7:30 to 9pm and Sunday 3:30 to 5pm; Takoma Community Center Pool, 300 Van Buren St. NW; Metro: Takoma.
- Attend a Washington Nationals baseball game with **G-NATS** (http://sports.groups.yahoo.com/group/dc-gnats), a club for gay fans of the team.

8 Walkabouts

Three history-rich walking tours on which you get unique insights into the city, past and present

DARE I SAY THIS? YOU COULD SPEND AN ENJOYABLE AND REWARDING WEEK in Washington and never step inside a museum. How? By exploring the city on foot. Outside the museums, you see the city itself, a lively capital with a wealth of architectural treasures, and you meet the locals, like me, who live here.

Washington is draped in layers of history, so almost any neighborhood is well worth a look. One excellent source of neighborhood walking itineraries is a nonprofit organization called **Cultural Tourism DC** (www.culturaltourismdc.org), which publishes a series of free "Heritage Trail" booklets. Seven in number and growing, they guide you into parts of the city you might not otherwise visit. Online copies can be downloaded at the website; printed copies can be ordered online. They also may be available (but don't count on it) at the **DC Visitor Information Center** (Ronald Reagan Building & International Trade Center, 1300 Pennsylvania Ave. NW; Metro: Federal Triangle; Mon–Sat 8am–6pm).

In the pages ahead, I outline three additional self-guided walking tours. I've chosen these special itineraries because they represent more fully Washington's status as a national and international capital. They are less folksy than Cultural Tourism's routes, but more politically and historically significant.

A stroll through Arlington National Cemetery is a reminder of the contribution America's military men and woman have made to the country's defense and of the ultimate cost of war. Georgetown, the city's oldest neighborhood, has been home to the country's movers and shakers since the city's birth. It's also an architectural delight. The tour along Embassy Row, lined with dozens of foreign embassies and statues of foreign leaders, highlights America's important role in world affairs.

Walking Tour 1: Arlington National Cemetery

Start: Visitor Center (take Metrorail to the Arlington Cemetery station).
Finish: Iwo Jima Statue/Rosslyn Metrorail station.
Time: 2 hours, not including time spent at Arlington House and Tomb of the Unknowns.
Best times: 8am to noon daily from late spring to early fall to avoid mid-day heat. Anytime from 8am to 5pm daily the rest of the year.
Worst times: Noon to 5pm in July and August because of the oppressive heat.
Hours: April through September 8am to 7pm; October through March 8am to 5pm.

The best-known of the nation's military cemeteries, Arlington National Cemetery is the last resting place for veterans from every American war. In rank, they range from private to five-star General of the Army. One of the country's most important national shrines, its rolling green hills above the Potomac River also shelter the remains of two U.S. presidents, numerous Supreme Court justices, and a few celebrities, boxer Joe Lewis, actor Lee Marvin, and mystery writer Dashiell Hammett among them. More than 300,000 servicemen and women, their families, and certain dignitaries are interred in the cemetery's 624 acres. Officials conduct an average of 28 burials every weekday.

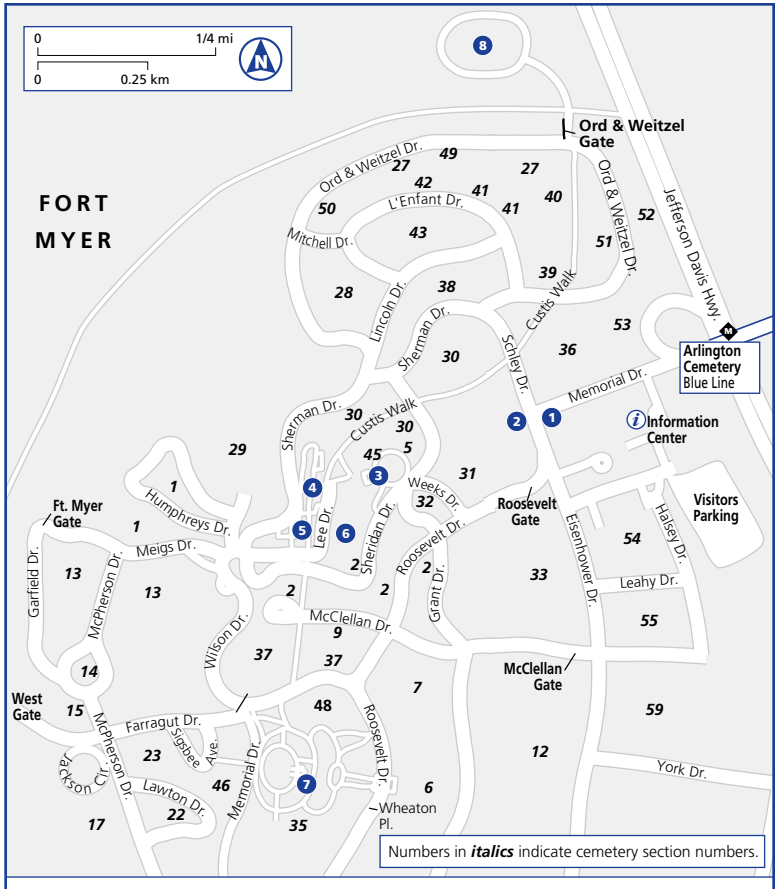
You can join an escorted Tourmobile tour of the cemetery, as I outline in Chapter 5 (p. 139). But if you have the time and the legs, this walkabout is a much better way to see the cemetery. The paid tour stops at the major sites, as does this walking tour. But it whisks you past almost everything else. On foot, you can read the gravestones; study the statuary and memorials; and pay homage to historic figures not mentioned on the formal tour. As you walk slowly past the endless rows of headstones, noting the youth of many, they seem to take on greater meaning.

Military cemeteries originated as a result of the traditional duty of commanders to care for battle casualties. In 1864, when the number of Civil War deaths overwhelmed the capacity of hospitals and burial grounds near Washington, the Army's Quartermaster General, Montgomery Meigs, proposed the use of 200 acres on what was the 1,100-acre plantation of the Robert E. Lee family before the war.

This tour will visit Arlington House, the Lee family home, which the federal government seized when Lee chose to fight for the Confederacy. By war's end, 16,000 graves were clustered near the house. In 1882, Lee's eldest son, Custis Lee, disputed the government's ownership, and the Supreme Court ruled in his favor. But because of the presence of so many graves, he accepted $150,000 in lieu of the return of the property to the Lees. Like his father, Custis Lee graduated from West Point and served in the Confederate army, attaining the rank of major general. In 1870, he succeeded his father as president of Washington and Lee University in Lexington, Virginia.

Note: The free map of the cemetery distributed at the Visitor Center uses the word "drive" when naming the streets. The street signs themselves use the word "avenue." I have chosen to use the word "drive" in this text for consistency.

Walking Tour: Arlington National Cemetery



1. Memorial Gate
2. Women in Military Service for America Memorial
3. Gravesite of John F. Kennedy
4. Arlington House
5. Tomb of the Unknown Civil War Dead
6. Gravesite of Pierre Charles L'Enfant
7. Tomb of the Unknowns
8. Iwo Jima Statue

1 Visitor Center

A large, modern structure with lots of natural light, the Visitor Center bustles like a busy railway station as sightseers line up at the ticket windows for the Tourmobile®. You're walking, so you skip the lines. Be sure to take a look at the current exhibits, which do change. Pick up a copy of the cemetery brochure at the Information Desk; you may find its map useful. This itinerary does not return to the Visitor Center, ending about a 20-minute walk away. Restrooms and water fountains are located at other major stops on this tour. No food is available at the cemetery, and picnicking is prohibited.

Exit the Visitor Center toward the tour vehicle plaza. At Eisenhower Drive at the end of the plaza, turn right to:

2 Roosevelt Gate/Schley Gate

The large wrought-iron gate in front of you, called Roosevelt Gate, honors President Theodore Roosevelt, who led the Rough Riders up San Juan Hill in Cuba in the Spanish-American War. Across Memorial Drive is its iron double, Schley Gate, a tribute to Admiral Winfield Scott Schley. His naval force defeated the Spanish fleet at Santiago Harbor in Cuba during the war. A gold wreath is displayed in the center of each gate. Inside each is a shield bearing the seals of the military services. The Army and Marine Corps seals adorn the Roosevelt Gate; the Navy and the Coast Guard seals are represented on Schley Gate. So where is the Air Force seal? The Air Force was a branch of the Army when the gates went up. Parties attending an Arlington burial who arrive by vehicle enter the cemetery through Roosevelt Gate.

Pass through the Roosevelt Gate to:

3 Memorial Drive

Look to your right down the length of Memorial Drive. Beyond the traffic circle, it continues across Arlington Memorial Bridge. The bridge and the drive were designed by the famous architectural firm of McKim, Mead, and White as a single project to provide a grand entrance to the cemetery. They were dedicated on Jan. 16, 1932 by President Herbert Hoover. The bridge is a symbolic link between the Lincoln Memorial and Arlington House, the Robert E. Lee Memorial—a reuniting, as it were, of the North and the South following the Civil War. Behind you, the huge Hemicycle, a semi-circular retaining wall, marks the ceremonial terminus of Memorial Drive. Within the huge niche at its center is a bas-relief of the Great Seal of the United States. Stairways on either side of the niche climb to a terrace, where you get an even more impressive view of the drive, the bridge, and the Lincoln Memorial.

Enter the Hemicycle at the Roosevelt Gate end. Before you, you'll see the:

4 Women in Military Service for America Memorial

More than 2.5 million women have served in military roles since the founding of America. A memorial to honor them, completed in 1995, could not have been placed in a more prestigious location in Arlington National Cemetery than at its ceremonial entrance. Their story is told in films and in changing exhibits in 14 alcoves that line the Hemicycle's spacious marble interior. A recent example was a display honoring the Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASP). More than 1,000 women joined the organization during World War II to fly noncombat missions, many of which had a definite element

Many Memorials

Arlington National Cemetery is the site of many more memorials than any single walking tour can visit. The free cemetery map pinpoints the sections or grids where these memorials can be found. Those you may want to seek out on your own might include:

- **Tomb of the Unknown Dead of the War of 1812,** 14 soldiers in a mass grave whose bodies were uncovered in a construction site in 1905. Section 1, Grid N—33/34.
- **USS Serpens Memorial,** honoring the 250 lives lost when the Coast Guard ammunition ship exploded on Jan. 29, 1945, at Guadalcanal in the South Pacific. Section 34, Grid XY—17.
- **Lockerbie Memorial Cairn,** for the 270 victims of the bombing of Pan American Flight 103 over Scotland on Dec. 21, 1988. Section 1, Grid NO—33/34.
- **Nurses Memorial,** dedicated to the nurses who have served in America's armed forces. Many are buried near the statue of a military nurse. Section 21, Grid M—19/20.
- **War Correspondents Memorial,** in memory of journalists who died while covering wars for the American public. Grid OP—23/24.

of danger. They delivered planes from the factories to the air fields. They pulled targets for antiaircraft gunnery training. And they tested planes to determine if they had been properly repaired.

Continue to the far end of the memorial and exit to Schley Gate. From the Hemicycle, cross Schley Drive to the footpath and turn left. Pass the first set of stairs and climb the second set on the left. Head to the:

5 President William Howard Taft Memorial and Gravesite

The 15-foot high shaft or stele of pink granite marking Taft's gravesite and that of his wife Helen is a fairly discreet remembrance of the *other* president buried at Arlington. His wife is the only *other* first lady here also.

A hefty 300-pounder, Taft was the weightiest person to occupy the White House. His achievements matched his size. After leaving the presidency, he was named Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, the only person to hold both exalted positions in the federal government. However, sports fans may know him best as the first president to throw out the first baseball of the season. The occasion, which inaugurated the yearly tradition, was a game between the Philadelphia Athletics and the Washington Senators in 1910.

Soon after Taft was buried in 1930, the War Department ordered a headstone to be topped by a Latin cross. No one knows whatever became of it; it simply never showed up. In its place, Helen Taft privately commissioned the odd-looking headstone rising before you. It is topped by a palmette motif, based on the fan-shaped leaves of a palm tree. The design was considered a hallmark of taste in neoclassical urban

architecture. But it also may refer to Taft's work for the U.S. government in the tropical Philippines early in his legal career.

Double back to the first set of stairs, and begin climbing them. Near the bottom of the grass-covered hillside between the two sets of stairs is a cluster of tombstones marking the graves of several World War II generals. On the far right, you'll find the:

6 Gravesite of Gen. Omar Bradley

The highest ranking of the group, Omar Bradley's tombstone displays the engraved five-star wreath of a General of the Army. Following the successful D-Day Landing in Normandy on June 6, 1944, Bradley commanded the largest force ever headed by an American field officer—1.3 million men whom he led across Europe into Germany. Because of his concern for his troops and their morale, he became popularly known as "The GI General." Gen. George C. Marshall, another five-star-wearer who served as Army Chief of Staff, dubbed Bradley "the finest Army group commander" in the U.S. Army.

Four other five-star World War II leaders are buried at Arlington: General George Marshall, who following World War II was named secretary of state and conceived the Marshall Plan; Admiral William D. Leahy, chief of staff to President Roosevelt; Air Force General Henry H. Arnold, chief of the Army Air Corps; and Admiral William F. Halsey, who commanded naval forces in the South Pacific. Only two men outrank them—World War I General of the Armies John J. "Black Jack" Pershing, who is buried at Arlington; and George Washington, who received his promotion posthumously. He is buried at Mount Vernon.

Climb the stairs, called Custis Walk, nearly to the top. It's a slog getting there, but inside the shady grove of holly trees on the left, you can rest and recover while contemplating:

7 The Tomb of Robert Todd Lincoln

It contains the remains of Abraham Lincoln's eldest son Robert, Robert's wife Mary, and their teenaged son Abraham Lincoln II. Their home is Stop 6 on Walking Tour #2: Georgetown.

Robert Lincoln reportedly pondered the question frequently of what would have happened if he had joined his father and mother at Ford's Theatre the night the president was assassinated. Invited by his father, young Lincoln, then 21, declined because he had planned another engagement with friends. Could he have thwarted the attack, saving his father's life? When he learned of the shooting, he joined his mother at the Petersen House, across the street from the theater, where the president died the next morning.

History books note one of the ironies in Robert Lincoln's life. As a young man, he came close to falling beneath the wheels of a train at a railway station. But he was rescued by actor Edwin Booth, brother of the man, John Wilkes Booth, who later killed his father. He was also present when Presidents James Garfield and William McKinley were assassinated, a coincidence that greatly troubled him. Robert and Mary's son Abraham died of an illness at the age of 17 in England, where his father was Minister to Great Britain.

Robert had expected to be buried at his father's tomb in Springfield, Illinois. But his wife Mary reportedly preferred an Arlington gravesite, figuring her husband had achieved significant distinction to warrant a site independent

of his father. Robert had served briefly in the Civil War after leaving college, and he once held the position of Secretary of War, both of which qualified him for Arlington.

Continue the climb to the top of Custis Walk, and turn left on Sheridan Drive. Look on the right for a large, semicircular tombstone with the name WEEKS:

8 Gravesite of Thurgood Marshall

Marshall, whose life was devoted to public service, became the first African-American to sit on the U.S. Supreme Court, a position he held for 24 years.

His dark gray tombstone is located on the hillside behind the Weeks memorial, along with those of several other Supreme Court Justices. Prior to his court appointment, he spent 25 years as legal counsel for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. In that position, he argued numerous cases before the Supreme Court, including *Brown v. Board of Education.* The court's landmark 1954 decision for Marshall and the NAACP declared separate but equal to be an unconstitutional justification for school segregation.

Nearby are the gravesites of other Supreme Court luminaries: Chief Justice Warren Earl Burger and Associate Justices Harry Blackmun, Potter Stewart, William J. Brennan, William O. Douglas, and Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr. Among the judges rests Admiral Hyman G. Rickover, "Father of the Nuclear Navy." An ornamental chain fence keeps you off the grass, so you don't get a close up view from the front at this stop. At Stop 9, some of the tombstones will be closer.

John Wingate Weeks, by the way, was an influential Massachusetts senator, secretary of war in the Harding and Coolidge administration, and failing candidate for the Republican nomination for president in the election that put Woodrow Wilson in the White House.

Continue on Sheridan Drive to the intersection of Weeks Drive. Turn right onto the approach to the Kennedy Gravesite and bear right onto the curving "handicap" access. Look to the right for Holmes and other justices:

9 Gravesite of Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr.

An American aristocrat, Holmes, a future Supreme Court Justice, grew up in a family whose friends included such New England literary heavyweights as Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Herman Melville, and Nathaniel Hawthorne. Graduating from Harvard (class poet) as the Civil War raged, he received a lieutenant's commission. Often in the heat of battle, he was wounded three times—in the chest at the Battle of Ball's Bluff near Leesburg, Virginia; in the throat at Antietam in Maryland; and in the foot at Chancellorsville in Virginia.

Holmes survived these wounds to experience another dramatic event during the war. James Edward Peters, author of *Arlington National Cemetery,* a guide to notable figures interred here, provides the details. In July of 1864, Confederate General Jubal Early was ordered to attack Washington in the hope of drawing Union troops away from Lee's beleaguered army. As Early's troops approached Fort Stephens on the outskirts of Washington, President Lincoln rode out to take a look. Climbing onto a rampart, Lincoln and his stovepipe hat drew Confederate fire. The general accompanying him suggested Lincoln take cover, but his advice was ignored. Finally, an exasperated

Holmes, who was present, shouted at Lincoln, "Get down, you fool!" This time the president listened and obeyed, later thanking Holmes.

An influential legal career led to his appointment at age 61 to the Supreme Court, where he served for 29 years. One of the court's most respected jurors, he became known as "the Great Dissenter" because of his astute legal opinions. His often quoted remark about taxes—"Taxes are what we pay for a civilized society"—is inscribed on the building housing the Internal Revenue Service in Washington.

Continue up the curved walkway to the:

10 Kennedy Gravesites

Adorned by the Eternal Flame, this may be the best-known gravesite in the country. It continues to be the one most visited in Arlington National Cemetery. Interred here with President John F. Kennedy, assassinated on Nov. 22, 1963, are his wife Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis, who died in 1994; their infant son Patrick, who died two days after his birth on August 7, 1963; and their unnamed daughter who was stillborn on August 23, 1956. The body of Robert F. Kennedy, Attorney General in his brother's administration, was placed a few steps to the left of the other Kennedy graves following his death by assassination. It is marked with a simple white cross. Excerpts from his speeches are inscribed on a fountain wall to the rear.

Initially the former president was buried in a small hillside plot ringed by a white picket fence. But the size of the crowds—as many as 3,000 an hour in the months following the funeral—overwhelmed the site. Cemetery officials and the Kennedy family decided a more suitable memorial should be built. A 2-year project, it was completed in 1967. The Kennedy family and the government shared the cost. The memorial, including the imposing circular walkway by which you arrived, the elliptical terrace (with its fine view of Washington), and the wall bearing inscriptions from Kennedy's words, now occupies 3¼ acres. The memorial, one of Arlington's most elaborate, easily handles the now diminished throngs.

At Kennedy's death, it was thought he would be buried in Brookline, Massachusetts, since most presidents lay at rest in their native states. Asked her opinion, the First Lady replied, "He belongs to the people." She also wanted to mark the site with a flame similar to that of the French Unknown Soldier in Paris. It is thought she may also have been influenced by the Eternal Light Memorial at Gettysburg National Military Park in Pennsylvania, which she and the president visited shortly before his death.

Burning from the center of a circular granite stone, the Eternal Flame required specially designed apparatus created by the Institute of Gas Technology in Chicago. Should rain extinguish the flame, a constantly flashing electric spark near the tip of the nozzle relights the gas. The fuel is natural gas, which is mixed with a controlled quantity of air to produce the flame's shape and color.

Retrace your path back via Sheridan Drive to Custis Walk and continue climbing the stairs almost to the top where you'll find the:

11 Gravesite of Mary Randolph

On the left, surrounded by a brick wall, is the oldest grave in Arlington. Mary Randolph, believed to be a direct descendant of Pocahontas, was a cousin of Mary Lee Fitzhugh Custis, wife of

the builder of Arlington House, George Washington Parke Custis. Robert E. Lee and Thomas Jefferson were among her other many cousins. She is thought to have been the godmother of Mary Anna Custis Lee, the wife of Robert E. Lee. The author of a popular how-to guide about household management, her many family connections brought her often to Arlington House, a place she regarded fondly. At her death in 1828, George Washington Parke Custis permitted her to be buried on his estate. The stone, its inscription barely legible, was a gift of her youngest son, Burwell.

Continue up the stairs to the walkway and turn left:

⓬ Lookout Point/Gravesite of Pierre Charles L'Enfant

This expansive terrace directly below Arlington House provides a fine view down the hillside to the Kennedy graves; a limited view of the Pentagon to the right and a panorama of Washington across the Potomac River.

Uphill behind you, the tomb to the left of the flagpole marks the remains of Pierre Charles L'Enfant, the Paris-born engineer entrusted by George Washington to design the new American capital city. A captain in Washington's Revolutionary War army, he was one of the founding members of the Society of the Cincinnati, an organization of officers who served in the war.

L'Enfant incorporated ideas from the great cities of Europe, drawing up plans for a grand mall linking the Capitol and the "President's House," wide avenues and squares, circles and triangles. But in 1792, Washington dismissed him because of his excessive fees and the highhanded manner in which he pursued his design. In 1825, he died penniless in Maryland and was buried there.

But the city he envisioned took shape, and in 1909 Congress acknowledged his contribution by giving him the honor of lying in state in the Capitol building. Afterwards, he was buried with full military honors at a site that offers a grand view of Washington. Two years later, President Taft dedicated the white marble memorial, now very much weathered. Inscribed within a circle on the monument is his plan for the city.

Climb to the top of the stairs to:

⓭ Arlington House

Resembling a Greek-temple, this multicolumned mansion was the pre–Civil War plantation home of General Robert E. Lee and his wife Mary Custis. Six of their seven children were born here. Your stop includes a 10-minute self-guided tour of the house itself, a peek into the slave quarters, a visit to the Lee Museum, and a walk through the garden.

This is a historically significant house closely linked to George and Martha Washington. George Washington Parke Custis, who built it between 1802 and 1818 on land his father John purchased, was the grandson of Martha Washington and grew up in Mount Vernon. Martha's first husband was Daniel Parke Custis with whom she had her son John and daughter Martha. She and George had no children. George Washington Parke Custis fathered a daughter, Mary Anna Randolph Custis. She married Robert E. Lee at Arlington House. Got it?

It may seem odd that the Confederate Army's commanding general is honored with a memorial overlooking Arlington National Cemetery, where so many Union troops lie. This was done in 1925 in recognition of his dedication to peace and reconciliation after the Civil War.

As you enter **Arlington House** (daily except Dec 25 and Jan 1 9:30am–4:30pm; free admission) through its columned portico, the room on the right off the entrance hall is the **Family Parlor,** which because of all the youngsters was often in disarray. Note the charming portrait of Mary Custis, painted in 1831 just before her marriage to Lee in this room. Adjoining it is the **Family Dining Room,** where—so family tradition maintains—Lee frequently placed a rosebud on the plate of each woman present for breakfast.

Upstairs (following the designated tour route) are the bedrooms, each one opening to the upper hall—used as a summer sitting room because it caught the breezes. Lee wrote his letter of resignation from the U.S. Army in the master bedroom, located at the top of the stairs on the far side of the hall. Back downstairs, the **White Parlor** is furnished with Victorian furniture the Lees purchased in 1855. The huge painting in the adjacent **Morning Room** depicts the Battle of Monmouth, one of Washington's Revolutionary War victories. Mary's father was the painter. It once hung in the U.S. Capitol and was protected during the Civil War at Tudor Place, the Georgetown mansion built by Martha Custis (granddaughter of Martha Washington; sister to the builder of Arlington House) and her husband (p. 200).

Exiting the house, move on to the Slave Quarters, the humble structures to the rear. In one room, a display introduces some of the plantation servants, focusing on their lives just before and after the war. Among them, Selina Gray, personal maid to Mary Lee, is credited with rescuing many artifacts belonging to George and Martha Washington left behind when the Lees departed. (George Washington Parke Custis brought them to the mansion from Mount Vernon.)

Though George Washington Parke Custis considered slavery "the mightiest serpent that ever infested the world," he kept 60 slaves at Arlington at his death in 1857. In his will, he stipulated that they be freed if the estate were free of debt. Otherwise, their freedom should be delayed for five years. Lee, executor of the estate, found the property seriously in debt. Five years later in 1862, he gave the slaves their promised freedom, writing from the battlefield.

Of particular note is the model of "Freedman's Village," a planned community created on the Lee estate in 1863 for former slaves. A temporary refuge, it had closed by 1900. Another former slave structure on the opposite side of the yard houses a book store, restrooms, and water fountain. Beyond it, a path leads through the Kitchen Garden, patterned after the original, to the **Robert E. Lee Museum.** Exhibits trace his life from boyhood to military commander to college president. Personal objects include the Colt revolver he received at the end of his tour of duty as superintendent of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point and the mess kit with folding silverware that he used throughout the Civil War.

Double back past the Slave Quarters to the **Flower Garden.** Mary Lee took great pride in the hilltop garden, shaping its formal design. Destroyed in 1864, it has been restored.

Walk a few steps to the right of the garden. A nearly hidden brick path on the left leads through a tall hedge to the:

14 Tomb of Unknown Civil War Dead

The large monument, set in what was the Lee family's rose garden, marks the mass graves of about 2,111 unknown soldiers killed in the Civil War, perhaps including Confederate casualties. It was

Arlington's first monument dedicated to troops killed in the fighting. In this way, their sacrifice was honored, but the monument also served a less noble cause. Reportedly, Quartermaster General Montgomery Meigs ordered that the bodies be buried at this specific site, figuring the graves would deter the Lees from ever returning to their home.

Follow the sidewalk alongside Meigs Drive to McPherson Drive and turn left. At the divide, keep to the left and continue past Farragut Drive. Turn right at Jackson Circle. While on Meigs Drive, keep an eye to the right for the gravesite (it's a mini Washington Monument) of Abner Doubleday, the Civil War officer who returned Union fire in the Confederate bombardment of Charleston's Fort Sumter on April 12, 1861. This marked the start of the war. Doubleday also is credited with being the "Father of American Baseball."

15 Confederate Memorial

The 32-foot-tall Confederate monument, designed by a Southern veteran of the Civil War, is ringed by the graves of 482 Southerners, including soldiers, their wives, 15 civilians, and 12 unknowns. The pointed headstones, different from others at Arlington, are said to stem from a Confederate legend that the points would "keep Yankees from sitting on them."

When the war ended, Southern families sought to decorate the Confederate graves, but often permission was denied because of the animosity between former enemies. But in 1906, William Howard Taft, then Secretary of War, granted the request of the United Daughters of the Confederacy to erect a major monument. President Woodrow Wilson spoke at the unveiling in 1914, a symbolic ceremony symbolizing the continuing reconciliation of North and South.

Sculptor Moses Ezekial placed a woman at the top of the monument to symbolize the South. In her left hand is a laurel wreath; in her right is a pruning hook resting on a plow stock. At her feet are inscribed these explanatory words from the Bible: "And they shall beat their swords into plow shares and their spears into pruning hooks." The four embossed urns on the base represent the 4 years of war; the 14 shields signify 13 Confederate states and the state of Maryland, which offered support to the South. Six vignettes—in one an officer kisses his infant child—recall the war's impact.

This is the stage of the walkabout you are most likely to encounter burial ceremonies. Be mindful to keep a discreet distance.

Double back on McPherson Drive to Farragut Drive and turn right. At Sigsbee Drive, turn right.

16 Mast of the USS *Maine*

"Remember the *Maine*!" was the rallying cry at the outset of the Spanish-American War. The vessel's main mast, standing upright atop a massive monument, is an emphatic reminder of what those words meant. On a diplomatic assignment to Cuba, the warship *Maine* exploded in Havana's harbor on the night of Feb. 15, 1898, killing more than 250 officers and sailors. In the heated journalism of the day, the press blamed Spain, which governed Cuba. Some modern historians think the explosion might simply have been an accident.

While war with Spain raged, the dead whose bodies could be recovered were buried in Havana. In 1899, at war's end, most were reburied in Arlington. Eleven years later when the *Maine* was raised from the harbor, 66 more bodies were recovered and buried at Arlington. The mast was transported

here as well. The ship itself was towed out to sea and scuttled with honors.

A total of 229 *Maine* victims are buried in the area encircled by Sigsbee Drive. All but 62 are unknowns. The two bronze cannons were captured from the Spanish. Sigsbee Drive is named for Admiral Charles Dwight Sigsbee, who as a younger captain commanded the *Maine.*

Descend the walkway on the far side of the monument, and turn left at the bottom of the slope where you'll encounter:

17 Three memorials

Three separate monuments stand side-by-side: the **Space Shuttle Challenger Memorial,** honoring the seven astronauts who died when the Challenger exploded on takeoff on January 28, 1986; the **Iran Rescue Mission (Operation Desert I) Monument,** dedicated to the eight military personnel who died in the failed rescue attempt in April 1980 of the 53 Americans held hostage in Iran; and the **Space Shuttle Columbia Memorial,** remembering the seven astronauts who died when their ship disintegrated on return to earth on February 1, 2003.

Return to the downhill walkway and turn right on Memorial Drive. Turn right onto the flagstone walk to the:

18 Gravesite of Audie Murphy

Before his 21st birthday, Audie Murphy (later a successful Hollywood actor) became American's most-decorated soldier. Wounded three times, he received the Medal of Honor for gallantry and 27 other medals. His very modest, government-issued tombstone, like those of thousands of others buried at Arlington, was too small to list all of his commendations. A small U.S. flag flies alongside it. The baby-faced Texas farmboy who would become a legend was rejected by the Marines and paratroopers because he was too short. But the Army infantry took him, sending him first to Sicily, where his ability in combat brought him promotion eventually to major.

Back home after the war, he got a hero's reception and his photo on the cover of *Life* magazine. Actor James Cagney urged him to go into films. He made 40, the best of which, critics say, was *Red Badge of Courage,* based on Stephen Crane's Civil War novel. He starred as himself in a movie based on his autobiography, *To Hell and Back.* He died in 1971, age 46, in the crash of a private plane near Roanoke, Virginia.

Cross Memorial Drive to the Memorial Amphitheater, setting for official ceremonies, and circle it to the right where you'll find the:

19 Tomb of the Unknowns

The body of the Unknown from World War I lies in the white marble sarcophagus. Beneath the terrace to the rear of it, indicated by the three rectangular slabs, are the Unknowns from World War II and the Korean War. For a time, an Unknown from the Vietnam War was buried also. But DNA testing later identified him, and the place now is kept vacant.

You will want to wait for the Changing of the Guard Ceremony, an amazing performance of precision marching and manual of arms. The tomb is guarded 24 hours a day, every day of the year. From April 1 to September 30, the ceremony takes place every half-hour; the rest of the year and at night, it's every hour. The Tomb Guards, all volunteers, are members of the 3rd U.S. Infantry. They must be trim, tall, and possess an unblemished military record.

Note that the Tomb Guard marches 21 steps down the mat behind the Tomb, turns east for 21 seconds, turns north for 21 seconds and then takes 21 steps back up the map, repeating the process throughout his time on duty. The number 21 reflects the 21-gun salute, the highest ceremonial military honor that can be bestowed. Restrooms and water fountains are located in the Memorial Amphitheater.

Take the path at the right of the Tomb, and circle downhill to the left past the steps leading up to the Tomb. Just beyond the steps, note a small sign pointing right to Section 7A. Near the end of the path, look right towards the:

20 Gravesite of Joe Louis

Joe Louis, the "Brown Bomber" and heavyweight champion of the world longer than any fighter, did not technically qualify for burial in Arlington—although he had served in the Army in World War II. At Louis' death in 1981, 3 decades after his final bout, President Ronald Reagan waived the technicalities, and "The Champ" received full military honors. As an Army sergeant, Louis was assigned to a segregated unit, fighting 96 exhibition matches before more than 2 million troops. Actor **Lee Marvin,** a Marine private wounded during the battle of Saipan in June 1944, is buried next to Louis.

You can complete the tour now by following Roosevelt Drive (just ahead, turn left) back to the Visitor Center and the Arlington Metrorail station. Or you can continue on this tour to the Netherlands Carillon and Iwo Jima Memorial, a 20-minute walk through the cemetery. If you decide to go on the longer tour, at Roosevelt Drive, turn left and follow it to Roosevelt Gate. Proceed through it and Schley Gate, continuing on to Custis Walk. Take the walkway downhill to the right. At Ord & Weitzel Gate, take the uphill path to the left where you'll find the:

21 Netherlands Carillon

The 50-bell carillon, the modern rectangular structure ahead, was a gift to the people of the United States in appreciation for the liberation of Holland on May 5, 1945 during World War II. It stands just outside Arlington Memorial Cemetery, located officially in parkland alongside George Washington Memorial Parkway. You can climb to the top for the views from 2 to 4pm on Saturdays. Summer concerts (June–Aug) are held from 6 to 8pm Saturdays. In May and September, they are held 2 to 4pm on Saturdays.

Follow the path north, bearing right into the grove of trees at the divide.

22 U.S. Marine Corps War Memorial

The Iwo Jima Statue is its popular name. But the official title is the **U.S. Marine Corps War Memorial.** One of the country's most famous (and most photographed) statues, it's a bronze recreation of the historic moment when five Marines and a Navy hospital corpsman raised the U.S. flag on Mount Suribachi on the Pacific island of Iwo Jima on Feb. 23, 1945. It is dedicated to all Marines who have given their lives in defense of the country since 1775. Actually, there were two flag raisings on 550-foot high Mount Suribachi that momentous day. Marines initially hoisted a small flag at 10:30am, thrilling U.S. forces all over the island. The statue depicts the raising of a second larger flag that afternoon, when the slopes had been cleared of the enemy. News photographer Joe Rosenthal snapped the second flag-raising, and his inspiring photo

Who Can Be Buried at Arlington?

Space is tight at Arlington National Cemetery, and authorities have imposed eligibility restrictions. Those who may be buried include:

- Any Armed Forces member who dies while on active duty.
- Any veteran retired from active duty.
- Any veteran retired from the Reserves over age 60 who served a period of active duty.
- Any Armed Forces member separated honorably for medical reasons prior to October 1, 1949. Must be certified 30% disabled on day of discharge.
- Any Armed Forces member receiving Medal of Honor, Distinguished Service Cross (Navy Cross or Air Force Cross), Distinguished Service Medal, Silver Star, Purple Heart.
- The president of the United States and past presidents.
- Anyone who served on active duty and who has held the position of chief justice or associate justice of the Supreme Court and certain other high government posts.
- Any former prisoner of war who died after November 30, 1993.
- Spouse, minor child, or permanently dependent child of the above eligible veterans.
- Certain spouses and minor children, including the widow or widower, of someone buried or lost at sea or declared missing in action.

Eligibility is not quite so limited for those whose ashes are placed in the cemetery's Columbarium. Check the cemetery website for full details at www.arlingtoncemetery.org.

went on to win a Pulitzer Prize and lasting fame. Three survivors of the event, Private First Class Rene A. Gagnon, Private First Class Ira Hayes, and Pharmacist Mate Second-class John H. Bradley, posed for the sculptor, Felix W. de Weldon, who modeled their faces in clay. The other three subjects died in subsequent fighting on Iwo Jima. To model the deceased's faces, de Weldon collected their physical statistics and old photos. The figures stand 32 feet high; the bronze flag pole is 60 feet long, and a cloth flag flies from it 24 hours a day. The memorial is the traditional finish line of the annual Marine Corps Marathon in October. A Marine in uniform drapes a "Finisher" medal over each entrant who makes it (I have one), shakes hands, and offers congratulations.

Continue past the monument, bearing left on the paved path uphill. Turn right on Lynn Street across the bridge. On the far side of the bridge, bear right, and go past Fairfax Drive to Wilson Boulevard. Turn left one block to North Moore Street, and then right a half block to:

23 Rosslyn Metro Station

Rosslyn is a busy commercial center, with many options for reasonably priced food and drink along Wilson Boulevard and adjacent streets.

Walking Tour 2: Georgetown

Start: Old Stone House (3051 M St. NW); Metrobus [30], [32], [34], [35], [36], or K Street Circulator Bus or Metrorail, Foggy Bottom/George Washington University followed by a ½-mile walk.

Finish: Old Stone House, following a wide loop itinerary.

Time: Approximately 90 minutes, not including time spent at historic houses or lingering in an outdoor cafe.

Best times: From 10am daily (after morning rush hour) until 5pm (before evening rush hour).

Worst times: Before 8am when very little is open; during rush hour periods; and after dark, when architectural details can't be seen.

If you are seeking a typical Washington neighborhood, Georgetown isn't the one. Nothing is typical about Georgetown. Many of the local folks are famous newsmakers. Its houses, even the tiny ones, are expensive; mansions sell in the multimillion dollar range. Its shops and restaurants cater to decidedly upscale tastes. It's also the city's most historic, liveliest, and prettiest neighborhood. I don't live in Georgetown, but I sure wish I did. You don't have to spend a penny to take a close-up look.

Settled primarily by Scottish immigrants in the early 1700s, Georgetown (named for King George II of England) became a busy seaport long before American Independence and the establishment of the new nation's capital on its doorstep. Tobacco was the main product, brought to warehouses and wharfs from Virginia and Maryland plantations for shipment to England. By 1791, when the site for Washington was chosen as the seat of government for the United States, Georgetown may have been the country's busiest tobacco market. Wealthy traders built mansions on the high bluffs overlooking the Potomac River. Soon senators and representatives flocked to join them. Georgetown was a short coach ride from the considerably more humble town of Washington then under construction.

Even today, Georgetown, roughly a square mile in size, seems like a village entirely separate from Washington—although at a decent pace I can walk from the White House to the Old Stone House (start of this tour) in 20 minutes. It enjoys its own thriving commercial center, drawing throngs of weekend window-shoppers; its own modest port, dispatching a river tour boat; and blocks of shady neighborhood streets lined with charming 18th- and 19th-century houses.

The tour I've outlined here, a wide loop, takes in all the aspects of Georgetown that have made it Washington's most-desired place to live: gorgeous old streets; the developing, modern waterfront; historic homes and gardens; residences of some of the rich and famous, including Jack and Jackie Kennedy; and its lively shopping lanes.

While I indicate stops at significant sights, don't limit your sightseeing only to them. Keep your eyes open to the architectural details of the elegant old homes that line almost every step of this route. Note the fine details such as flickering glass lamps, wrought iron gates, ornate brickwork, whimsical front porch statuary, beautifully carved doors, and the well-tended gardens with cobblestone walkways.

The predominant architectural style is that of the Federal period (about 1790–1830), typically a boxlike structure with an elegant door and windows arranged in strict symmetry. But you will see homes resembling Greek temples and a few Victorian "painted ladies" looking like visitors from San Francisco.

1 Old Stone House

As Washington's oldest known structure still standing, the unassuming little stone house makes an appropriate beginning for a Georgetown tour. Completed in 1765, it was built of solid hewn oak boards and blue fieldstone, quarried about 2 miles up the Potomac River. A succession of owners ran businesses out of the house or rented it. Initially a one-room residence for the family of Christopher Layman, a cabinet-maker, in later years it acquired a second floor and rear kitchen. In 1953, when the federal government bought the house, it served a used car dealership. The cars were displayed on a paved lot that has since been transformed into a lovely English-style garden. Be sure to see it.

The house occupies a potentially pricey piece of real estate, and it might well have been torn down. But it has been spared over the decades. A myth might be responsible.

As an on-duty National Park Service ranger tells the story, a sign once hung over the front door proclaiming "George Washington's Headquarters." Not true, as park historians now know. What really happened: In 1791, President George Washington and Pierre L'Enfant, who designed Washington's street layout, stayed at Suter's Tavern in Georgetown. Later, John Suter, Jr., son of the tavern owner, opened a clockmaker's shop in the Old Stone House. The Suter name linked to George Washington and the Old Stone House gave birth to the misconception that it once served as Washington's office, and nobody dared tear down a house with these presidential credentials.

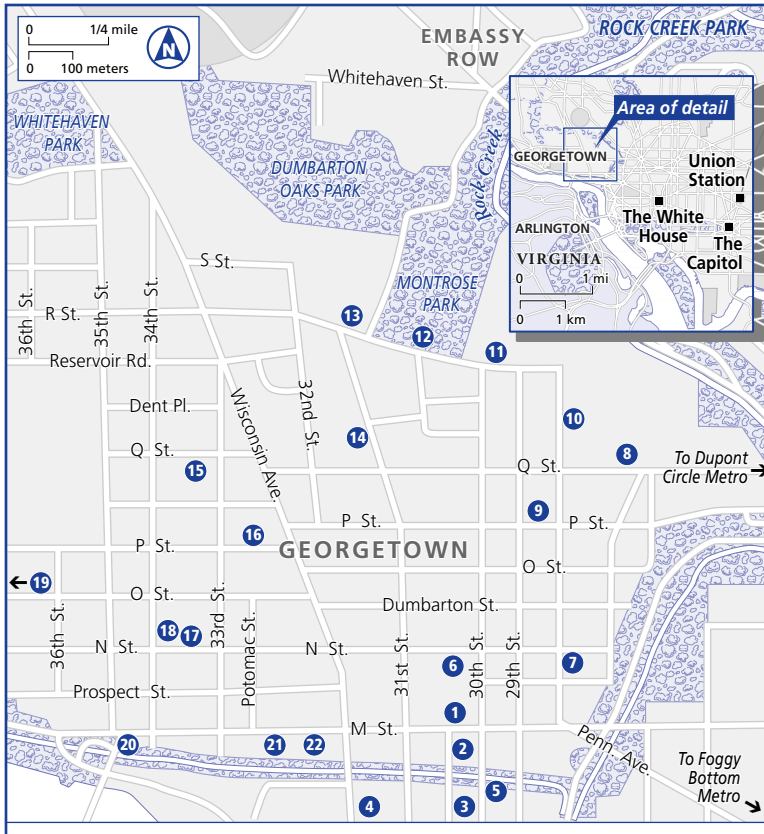
The house is open noon to 5pm Wednesday through Sunday. The garden is open from 9am to 4pm daily. There is no charge. If you start this walkabout before noon and the house hasn't yet opened, complete the itinerary and then take a look inside.

Walk a half block south toward the Potomac on Thomas Jefferson Street NW. Immediately in front as you step from the Old Stone House is:

2 Lock 4, Chesapeake & Ohio National Historical Park

Lock 4 is where the canal boat, the 80-passenger Georgetown, departs on 1-hour canal cruises Wednesday though Sunday from early April to late October. The first cruise each day is at 11am; if you are there by 10:45am, you can watch the crew, dressed in 19th-century costume, harness the pair of mules that provides the locomotion. It's a bustling scene from out of the past as the boat loads its passengers and the otherwise docile mules try to snatch one more mouthful of hay before going to work. To board now, purchase cruise tickets at the Canal Visitor Center, across the street to your left at 1057 Thomas Jefferson St. (restrooms inside). But I recommend continuing on this walkabout and returning to take a later cruise. By then, you will be ready for a relaxing—and cooling—ride into the countryside. See "Tours" in Chapter 5 (p. 136) for more details on hours and prices. In season, you can view the canal boat, an authentic reproduction, between tours at Lock 4.

Walking Tour: Georgetown



1. Old Stone House
2. C&O Canal
3. Washington Harbour
4. Waterfront Park
5. House of Sweden
6. Robert Lincoln House
7. Chagall Mosaic
8. Dumbarton House
9. Reuben Daw's Fence
10. Evermay
11. Oak Hill Cemetery
12. Montrose Park
13. Dumbarton Oaks
14. Tudor Place
15. Pomander Walk
16. JFK Residence
17. JFK Residence
18. Cox's Row
19. Georgetown U
20. Francis Scott Key Park
21. Dean & Deluca
22. Georgetown Park

Georgetown's Other History

In its early years, Georgetown was the hub of a major slave trade, buying and selling captives taken from Africa and slaves from plantations in Maryland and Virginia. In 1862, while the Civil War raged, President Lincoln signed a local law freeing Washington's slaves months before his Emancipation Proclamation. Seeking freedom, African-Americans from the Confederacy poured into Georgetown, creating a large black working class. But many lost their jobs when port operations declined. And when real estate prices began to soar, they moved away, leaving only a small population today. But the Mt. Zion United Methodist Church (1334 29th St. NW), the oldest African-American Church in Washington, is still in operation. Many in its congregation, widely dispersed in the Metropolitan area, are descendants of Georgetown's earlier residents. The church was founded in 1816; the current brick structure was built in the 1870s. To see the church, detour north on 29th Street between Stops 6 and 7 on this walking tour.

The C&O Canal was conceived during the period of the late 1790s and early 1800s when America experienced a canal-building boom. More than 3,000 miles of canals were constructed. In a mostly roadless landscape, they carried manufactured goods and settlers inland to places that riverboats could not reach, returning with lumber, grain, hay, and coal for the increasingly industrialized East. The heyday of the canal era lasted until the mid–19th century when railroads began to replace them. Most of the canals have crumbled into oblivion. But a few, including the C&O, remain to tell the story of the canal boatmen, the lock tenders, their families, and their unique way of life.

President John Quincy Adams broke ground for the canal and towpath on July 4, 1828. Though he and its investors were unaware, the canal already was on its way to becoming obsolete. On the same day, construction began on the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad in Baltimore, and over the years it would prove a tough and eventual victorious rival in the interior trade.

The initial plan, called the "Great National Project," envisioned a 460-mile canal linking Georgetown with Pittsburgh. The cost was estimated at $3 million and completion was anticipated in 10 years. It didn't happen that way. Disease epidemics, money problems, and labor troubles slowed work for 22 years until 1850. By then, the cost had mushroomed to $13 million, and even then the canal fell far short of its original terminus, reaching only 185 miles to Cumberland, Maryland. Still, it managed to continue operating for 74 years until 1924, when massive flooding forced it into bankruptcy. While it was in business, the canal routinely lifted boats from near sea level to an elevation of 605 feet at Cumberland using 74 lift locks similar to Lock 4. On its tour, the Georgetown is maneuvered through a lock to demonstrate how they operated.

In the 1950s, transportation planners suggested turning the canal and its 12-foot-wide towpath into a Potomac River auto parkway. But Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas, a

conservationist, led a march on the towpath to convince the government, public, and press that the canal should be preserved for its scenic and historic value. The entire canal and towpath from Georgetown to Cumberland was established as a national historical park in 1971. The canal's recreational uses are detailed in Chapter 7 (p. 162).

Now walk two blocks south to where Thomas Jefferson Street dead ends at the Potomac. Cross K Street, which runs beneath the elevated Whitehurst Freeway. The freeway, a major commuter route, is Georgetown's most obvious eyesore. Movement is underway to remove it, perhaps by channeling traffic in a tunnel beneath K Street. We'll see.

3 Washington Harbour

A fantasy of splashing fountains, terraced outdoor cafes, offices, and condominiums, the Washington Harbour complex is Washington's version of the Riviera—a waterside playground for the rich and famous and their wannabe onlookers. Sometimes even I, a longtime resident, have trouble conceiving how the nation's sober-sided capital acquired such an architectural frivolity. I'm not being critical here; the place delights me. Its designer, Arthur Cotton Moore, faced the task of blending old Georgetown's adjacent Victorian neighborhood with the nearby classical monuments on the Mall. What he came up with, to quote a generally appreciative review by the American Institute of Architects, was a postmodern assemblage that "borders on the eccentric," adding that it was "easily the most talked about building of the 1980s." Much of Washington's Potomac shoreline has been treated well, kept open by parks and pedestrian lanes that welcome the public. But Georgetown's waterfront, blighted by the overhead Whitehurst Freeway, developed as an industrial area. This 1980s project was a big step in opening up this stretch of the river to the neighborhood and the city, a process that continues.

On summer nights, the complex's twinkling lights invite outdoor dining or maybe just a drink beside the river. But on this tour we're just passing through. From the boardwalk alongside the river, the Kennedy Center to the left makes a tempting snapshot. That dense woodland directly across the river is Theodore Roosevelt Island, preserved as a memorial to the former president. Look to your right to spot the ticket booth for Capitol River Cruises, which offers daily 50-minute cruises beginning at noon.

Detour briefly to the right on the boardwalk to what is planned as:

4 Georgetown Waterfront Park

It will replace a shabby park already there and a large parking lot. To the city's credit, and much appreciated by its residents, Washington has made excellent scenic recreational use of much of the Potomac waterfront. The stretch of river alongside Georgetown has been an exception. Washington Harbour was the first big improvement; the next big step is Waterfront Park. Construction, began in late 2006, could be well under way by the time you read this.

Retrace your steps on the boardwalk one block past Thomas Jefferson Street, and turn left at the giant sundial to 30th Street. On your right, the soaring, six-story glass sculpture is the:

5 House of Sweden

A novel concept for a foreign embassy, it was completed in September of 2006. Under one architecturally dramatic roof

are located the Embassy of Sweden; organizations and companies with a Swedish-American focus; a trade exhibition area; a conference center; and two floors (the top ones) of luxury river view apartments. Costing $34 million, the building is Sweden's way of boosting its profile in the United States and assisting Swedish trade delegations to this country.

Five top Swedish architects submitted entries in a design competition for the building. A jury chose the work of Gert Wingardh and Tomas Hansen of Wingardh Architects of Gothenburg. The exterior of the building is clad in screened glass interspersed with a framework of wood—the kind of building materials used in Sweden. The idea was to give the structure a feeling of light and airy openness, enhanced by its views of the Potomac and adjacent Rock Creek Park.

Continue north on 30th Street across the canal and busy M Street to N Street, and turn left for a half block to:

6 Robert Todd Lincoln House (3014 N St. NW)

Now a private residence, the site of many fashionable parties, the large red-brick house was for many years the residence of Robert Todd Lincoln, the eldest son of President and Mrs. Abraham Lincoln. Built about 1799, it was initially the home of a wealthy tobacco merchant from Scotland. Lincoln purchased it in the early 1900s, residing there and at a second home in Vermont until his death in 1926. He added substantially to the original building.

A college student during much of the Civil War, Lincoln at age 21 received a captain's commission in February of 1865 near the war's end and served on the immediate staff of General Ulysses S. Grant. Following the war, he earned a law degree in Illinois, where he had been born in 1843, and embarked on a quite distinguished career as lawyer, diplomat, and company president. As the slain president's son, he was much esteemed by the American public, much as John F. Kennedy's daughter and son.

From 1881 to 1885, he served as Secretary of War under Presidents James Garfield and Chester Arthur. President Benjamin Harrison named him Minister to Great Britain, a position he held from 1889 to 1893. He retired in 1922 as president and chairman of the board of the Pullman Palace Car Company. The only one of the Lincolns' four sons to reach maturity, Robert Todd Lincoln was present at the dedication of the Lincoln Memorial in 1922. He is buried in Arlington National Cemetery along with his wife Mary Harlan and their teenaged son Abraham Lincoln, Jr. The gravesite is a stop on the Arlington cemetery walkabout.

Double back on N Street to 28th Street. En route, note the row of fine Federal period houses at #2806, #2808 and #2812, all believed to have been built in the early 1800s. The Federal-period house at #2812 is often referred to as the Decatur House, because the widow of Stephen Decatur is said to have lived there after her husband's death. Read more about the Decaturs in Chapter 5 (p. 130). Its door is especially lovely.

7 Chagall Garden Mosaic

At #2726, on the next corner, you will have to strain to see the Marc Chagall mosaic tile artwork over the garden wall alongside 28th Street. It is a large work (10 ft. × 17 ft.), placed at the far end of the backyard garden on a brick wall adjoining the neighboring house.

Beloved Bison

If you're up to it, detour 3 blocks east on Q Street to see the Buffalo, four massive creatures that mark the approaches to Dumbarton Bridge. They are life-size, each 7 feet high and realistically fashioned in bronze in 1914. I cite them because they have been fondly adopted by generations of Washington residents. They are well worn, sometimes (unless freshly scrubbed) bedecked in a patina of green but still majestic (and, well, loveable). The bridge, which links the Kalorama neighborhood to Georgetown across Rock Creek, is an interesting structure itself, designed to resemble a Roman aqueduct. The juxtaposition of buffalo (really bison) and ancient Rome prompted the American Institute of Architects to comment: "It's a bit like watching Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show trundle across the Ponte Vecchio." Artistic curiosities like these enliven the city's generally more serious sculptural heritage. Double back to Dumbarton House to continue the walking tour.

Chagall was a friend of the owners, art patrons and collectors, and stayed often as a guest at their house. Chagall, who loved Georgetown's small-town feeling, promised his hosts that one day he would do something for their garden. And in 1969, he showed them a drawing of the mosaic he planned. The upper half features figures from Greek mythology; the lower half depicts refugees from abroad arriving in "the land of skyscrapers." Chagall was a World War II refugee himself. On the owner's death, the mosaic is bequeathed to the National Gallery of Art. For the best view, stand on your tiptoes on the sidewalk across the street from the garden.

Continue east on N Street to 27th Street, which parallels Rose Park. Go north on Q street to:

8 Dumbarton House and Garden (2715 Q St. NW)

Joseph Nourse served as Register of the U.S. Treasury for the first six U.S. presidents. He was apparently close to the First Ladies as well: Dolly Madison took brief refuge in the house on Aug. 24, 1814 when she was forced to flee from the White House as the British were approaching during the War of 1812. This 1796 Georgetown mansion is a fine example of the Adamesque style made popular by a fashionable Scottish architect of the era named Robert Adam. It now houses the headquarters of the National Society of the Colonial Dames of America. They open it to the public as a museum of Federal period furniture and decorative arts (☎ 202/337-2288; www.dumbartonhouse.org; $5 adults, free for students with valid ID; escorted tours Tues–Sat 10:15am, 11:15am, 12:15pm, and 1:15pm; closed all Federal holidays). A tour of the seven museum rooms lasts about 45 minutes. The spotlight is on the Federal period furnishings (roughly 1790–1830), but you get insights into the upscale Georgetown lifestyle and a brief history of the early owners of the property. If decorative arts are your passion, you don't want to miss this site. If

not, I'd suggest skipping the tour and strolling through the lovely walled garden. Take a walk along its graveled paths, which the organization landscaped in 1991 to celebrate its centennial.

Continue west on Q Street to 28th Street and turn left. At P Street, turn right where you'll see:

9 Reuben Daw's Fence

As you negotiate this short jog, note the Federal-style house at No. 1511 28th Street that sports an Asian look. The black iron fence in front of the trio of P Street houses was the idea of Daw, a locksmith, who is said to have used Mexican War muskets that he purchased in a pawn shop to erect it. Dean Acheson, secretary of state in the Truman administration, lived at #2805, hosting a luncheon here for the president on his final day in office.

Return to 28th Street, and turn left. Walk to 1623 28th St. otherwise known as:

10 Evermay

Privately owned, this huge Georgian mansion on the right dating to the early 1790s is one of Georgetown's finest homes. You can't see much of it, because it is mostly hidden behind a tall wall that secludes the 3.5-acre estate. But the spacious front yard and entrance drive give you an idea of its grandeur. Samuel Davidson, a Scottish immigrant who made a fortune in real estate, purchased the site and built the house with proceeds he earned in a sale of land that is now occupied by the White House and Lafayette Park. Davidson, who is buried in Oak Hill Cemetery (Stop 11), bequeathed the property to a nephew in Scotland (wouldn't we all like a rich uncle like this). But he stipulated conditions: His nephew had to move to Georgetown, and he had to change his name to Davidson. The nephew, no fool, did both and lived in the house until his death. The fifth owner, an architect and diplomat, restored the house in 1924.

Continue north on 28th Street to R Street and turn left to 30th Street until you reach:

11 Oak Hill Cemetery

This historic 15-acre cemetery, dating to 1849, doubles as a beautifully landscaped garden in the natural 19th-century Romantic style of England. Terraces dotted with fountains and statuary stair step down a steep slope. The burial stones and monuments are mostly from the 19th century and particularly from the Civil War. Edwin Stanton, Abraham Lincoln's Secretary of War, is buried here. Most of the plots were sold years ago, and until recently the few burials still permitted were limited to spaces in old family lots. But the cemetery is installing underground crypts, making new burial spaces available. Visitors are welcome; you can purchase a $3 guide to who's buried where at the office just inside the entrance gate. The grounds are open (no charge) from 10am to 4pm Monday through Friday, except during burials and on national holidays.

W.W. Corcoran founded the cemetery, purchasing the acreage along Rock Creek from a great nephew of George Washington. He is the same Corcoran, a wealthy banker, who established the Corcoran Gallery of art in what is now the Renwick Gallery (p. 121 and p. 120, respectively). James Renwick, Jr., architect of the Smithsonian "Castle" and the Renwick Gallery, designed the cemetery's iron enclosure and the little Chapel, visible on the right. He patterned it after the old Gothic chapels of England.

Why So Many Dumbartons?

A tract of land that includes much of today's Georgetown once was called Rock of Dumbarton. One of Georgetown's earliest settlers, a Scotsman named Ninian Beall, had opposed England's Oliver Cromwell, who temporarily ousted the monarchy. Beall was taken prisoner at the Battle of Dunbar in 1650 when Cromwell invaded royalist Scotland. Dispatched as a prisoner to Barbados, he eventually made his way to what is now Georgetown, a part of the English colony of Maryland. He is said to have named the land he acquired on the bluff overlooking the Potomac River the "Rock of Dunbarton" after a rock outcropping near Glasgow. Dumbarton was a later spelling change. Along with the park, there's Dumbarton House (Stop 8) and Dumbarton Oaks and Gardens (stop 13).

Dean Acheson, whose residence was noted at Stop 9, is buried at Oak Hill. Other notables include the Peter family, owners of Tudor Place (ahead on Stop 14); John Howard Payne, who wrote the words to "Home Sweet Home;" John Nicolay, Lincoln's White House secretary and noted biographer; General Joseph Willard, proprietor with his brother of the Willard Hotel (p. 134); and Peggy O'Neal Eaton. Eaton, one of the prettiest women in Washington in her day, was a tavern keeper's daughter who married Senator John Eaton of Tennessee. Her alleged conduct—was she unfaithful to her first husband, who committed suicide?—caused a split in the Cabinet of President Andrew Jackson. Jackson stoutly defended her reputation, as did Martin Van Buren, his Secretary of State, but the gossip raged. Legend has it that she wanted her tombstone to read, "She was never dull." But, sad to say, she has no tombstone at Oak Hill.

The cemetery also holds the remains of two Confederate spies, both women. Antonia Ford Willard fell in love with her captor, General Joseph Willard (of the Willard Hotel above), and later married him. Bettie Duval Webb secreted messages in her abundant hair; she was part of a famous spy ring.

Continue west on R Street a few steps to:

⓬ Montrose Park

This park, which feeds into Rock Creek Park, was the site of Parrott's Ropewalk in the early 19th-century. Richard Parrott manufactured rope and rigging used on sailing vessels docking at Georgetown. It was called a "walk" because strands of hemp to be woven into cordage were laid out in long parallel segments like raised railroad tracks, and workers walked back and forth the length of the strands as they wove the rope. At the western end of the park, a sign points to the right down a shady walkway to Dumbarton Oaks Park. The walk is called **"Lovers Lane,"** a pleasant stroll. When Robert and Mildred Bliss purchased Dumbarton Oaks in 1920, they gave 27 acres to the National Park Service, most of which forms Dumbarton Oaks Park.

Continue west on R Street to 31st Street to:

13 Dumbarton Oaks and Garden

When the prominent Washington family, the Blisses, bought Dumbarton Oaks in 1920, the grounds had been neglected. Derelict farm buildings stood on its steep slopes, and cow paths wandered among them. Mildred Bliss' goal, a 20-year project, was to transform the land into a distinctively original garden yet one that displayed elements of the traditional English, French, and Italian gardens that she loved. She chose as her landscaper Beatrix Jones Farrand, who had worked on the private gardens of John Rockefeller, Jr., and the grounds at Yale University. The two aimed for informality, beauty, and interest in winter as well as in summer, and spaces for outdoor living.

A 30-minute stroll takes you through the 1810 Orangery, its wall covered by a fig planted before the Civil War; the Rose Garden, a Bliss favorite with nearly 1,000 roses; the Fountain Terrace with its 18th-century fountain; and the Pebble Garden, which covers the former tennis court. The garden is open March 15 though October 31 from 2 to 6pm and November 1 through March 14 from 2 to 5pm; it is closed Monday, all Federal holidays, December 24, and during foul weather. Admission is $7 adults, $5 seniors (60 plus) and children (2–12) from March 15 to October 31. There is no fee the rest of the year.

The house is of historic interest as well: two international meetings held at Dumbarton Oaks laid the foundation for the establishment of the United Nations. Now a property of Harvard University, a gift from Robert and Mildred Bliss, the estate's museum displays the couple's renowned collection of Byzantine and pre-Columbian artifacts, many of them gold (p. 197).

Turn left 1 block on 31st Street to:

14 Tudor Place (1644 31st St. NW)

This beautiful mansion, occupying a full square block, was owned by Martha Custis, granddaughter of Martha Washington, and her tobacco merchant husband Thomas Peter. If you have time, I recommend taking the 45-minute tour of the house; it's full of objects George and Martha Washington used in Mount Vernon. Details of the house and tour appear in Chapter 11 (p. 264). Even if you don't enter the house, step up the entrance walkway for a good look at the exterior. The house is regarded as a premier example of American neoclassical architecture. Its 19th-century American silver collection is regarded as especially outstanding. Tudor Place remained in the Peter family until 1984.

Take a Break

As you make your way to Stop 15, you cross busy Wisconsin Avenue, one of Georgetown's two major commercial streets. Detour downhill a couple of blocks for lunch at Georgetown's most historic restaurant. Family-run since 1933, it's **Martin's Tavern** (1264 Wisconsin Ave. NW at N Street; ☎ 202/333-7370; www.martins-tavern.com). John Kennedy courted Jacqueline here, and it's still a favorite of Georgetown residents. The menu is all-American and moderately priced. Some outdoor tables are available, weather permitting. But at lunch, you may prefer the air-conditioned interior.

At 31st and Q streets, turn right on Q. Proceed 2 blocks to Wisconsin Avenue. Jog left a half block and then right onto Volta Place. A half block past 33rd Street, the alleyway on the left is:

15 Pomander Walk

The 10 tiny pastel-colored houses, five on each side of the lane, date from 1885. Occupying what was once a notorious slum area housing former slaves freed in the Civil War, they are an example of some of Georgetown's humbler structures that have been restored to charming, albeit pricy homes. Note the appealing features such as double-door entrance alcoves, flower boxes in the windows, and gas lights. But would you want to live in a house tucked into a narrow alley, without any kind of decent view to speak of? For lots of Washingtonians, the lure of Georgetown and its urban attractions is strong. They are close to work, restaurants, shops, movies, and nightspots. If they want a view, the Potomac River is a 10-minute walk away, and the towpath of the C&O Canal transports them into the countryside in only a few more minutes.

Take Volta Place west to 34th Street; turn left to P Street; and turn left again to:

16 3271 P St. NW

Individually and as a couple, John and Jacqueline Kennedy often chose Georgetown as their residence. The future president, then a U.S. senator, lived in this 1818 Federal-style house in 1953 while courting the future First Lady, at the time "The Inquiring Photographer" for the *Washington Times-Herald* newspaper. It was here, one presumes, that they made many of the plans for their wedding in Newport, Rhode Island. After the wedding, they rented a larger town house at 3321 Dent Place, which is not on this tour. Note that for a few blocks P Street is paved with bricks, and abandoned streetcar tracks still remain. In the 1950s, the city shut down its streetcar lines and substituted buses, a decision that many longtime residents regret.

Double back on P Street to 33rd Street, and turn left. At N Street, turn right to:

17 3307 N St. NW

Another Federal-style house and another Kennedy home, this one was a gift from John to Jacqueline in 1957 after the birth of their daughter Caroline. John, Jr., was born while they lived here. This was the Kennedy residence during the presidential campaign. The double living room, redecorated three times in their first year of residence—one can only speculate why—proved an excellent place to host intimate political gatherings because of its spaciousness. After Kennedy's election, the press gathered outside the door day and night for 2 frosty months before the Inaugural hoping for news of Cabinet choices and other developments. Helen Montgomery, who lived across the street, graciously invited members of the press inside from the cold, serving them coffee and sandwiches. A bronze plaque on the house commends her hospitality.

Continue on N Street to:

18 Cox's Row (3327–3339 N St. NW)

The American Institute of Architects cites this row of five town houses, built between 1815 and 1818, as "among the finest and purest examples of Federal-era architecture in a city known for its federal-era buildings." Such distinctive features as sunken panels, arched doorways, and leaden swags (a form of ornamentation above the doorway and windows resembling bunches of evergreen branches) reflect the Federal style—only slightly altered by later modest touches of restoration. The row

has historic as well as architectural significance. Colonel John Cox, the builder, was a successful Georgetown merchant. He married an heiress, whose dowry included the land on which nearby Georgetown University sits. In time, Cox was elected mayor of Georgetown, a position he held for 22 years. When Lafayette returned to Washington in 1824, Cox invited him to stay at #3337, and Lafayette accepted. Cox and his wife lived next door at #3339. Note the whimsical polished brass fox head adorning the fence outside #3327.

Continue on N Street to 37th Street and turn right for one block:

19 Georgetown University, 37th and O streets NW

Founded in 1789 with just 12 students, Georgetown University is the oldest Catholic and Jesuit university in the United States. Today it enrolls 13,000 students in four undergraduate schools, the graduate school, and professional schools of business, law, and medicine. Its School of Foreign Service is one of the largest schools of international relations in the world and the oldest in the United States. More than 60 buildings dot the 104-acre campus.

This walkabout does not include a campus tour, but of course you are welcome to explore on your own. I'll point out some highlights you can see from the entrance walk.

As you enter the Main Gate, pause at the old stone gatehouse on the left, which serves as an information booth. You should find pamphlets with a map of the campus placed in front of the window. The seated gentleman directly ahead of you is John Carroll, the university's founder and the first archbishop of Baltimore.

The imposing gray granite fortress with multiple spires behind him is Healy Hall, the campus centerpiece completed in 1879. Named for Patrick F. Healy, the first African-American president of a major university who served from 1873 to 1882, it houses administrative offices and classrooms. Its loftiest tower soars 300 feet above the Potomac River. Riggs Library, occupying the tower on the left, is one of the last cast-iron libraries in the United States. A money-saving architectural phase, library stacks (where the books are shelved) were made of cast iron and are part of the building's support. The big drawback is that the stacks can't be moved. Behind Healy Hall is the Quadrangle, scene of presidential addresses from George Washington to Bill Clinton, a 1968 graduate. Overlooking the Quadrangle from behind Healy Hall is Old North Hall, completed in 1793 and the oldest structure on the campus. Also on the Quadrangle is Dahlgren Chapel of the Sacred Heart, which has served the campus since 1893. The chapel's stained-glass windows and pipe organ make it a favorite for weddings. The cross suspended over the main altar dates to the earliest days of colonial Maryland.

Exit the Georgetown campus to 37th Street and head right 2 blocks to Prospect Street. Turn left to 36th Street. On the right, descend 75 steps to M Street. Go left to 34th Street, and cross M Street to the park.

20 Francis Scott Key Park and "The Star-Spangled Banner" Memorial

Key is remembered as the man who wrote the words for the National Anthem the night an English force bombarded Baltimore's Fort McHenry in the War of 1812. A prominent lawyer, his home at the time was located 100 yards west on M Street. But it was dismantled when Francis Scott Key Bridge, just to your right,

was constructed in 1923. A bust of Key is easy to miss beneath the park's shady arbor. Information signs provide more details of the British attack of September 13 and 14, 1814, when by the dawn's early light the huge star-spangled banner still flew above Fort McHenry.

Walking Tour 3: Embassy Row

Start: Washington National Cathedral (Wisconsin Avenue at Massachusetts Avenue NW; Metrobus [N2], [N4], [N6] from Dupont Circle).

Finish: Dupont Circle.

Time: Approximately 90 minutes, not including time spent at the Cathedral or other attractions.

Best times: Weekdays during normal office hours to catch glimpses of foreign dignitaries, sometimes in their native dress, and to step inside churches and a mosque.

Worst times: At night, when everything of interest shuts down.

A stroll on Embassy Row is like a trip around the world. Here is Togo; over there is Finland; Brazil is just ahead—national flags flying in festive greeting.

After 1900, when Massachusetts Avenue was extended north of Dupont Circle, and prior to the Depression, wealthy residents began building outstanding Beaux Arts mansions along the new lane. After the stock market crash of 1929, they often proved too expensive to maintain. With Great Britain and Japan leading the way in the late 1920s early 1930s, foreign countries began snapping up the properties and lots. Today, about 75 embassies, chanceries, or ambassadorial residences are located on or near the 2-mile stretch of Massachusetts Avenue between Dupont Circle and Wisconsin Avenue NW. As a result, it was dubbed Embassy Row.

A word on those distinctions: An embassy is the official office or residence of the ambassador. Some ambassadors live and work in the embassy; others maintain separate residences, commuting to their job like the rest of us. A chancery is the embassy's office; this is where you might apply for a visitor's visa. It could be located within the embassy or not. Some countries also provide separate offices for special missions, such as the military attaché's office. In all, about 180 countries maintain a diplomatic presence in Washington.

Many countries preserve the original structures, adding only a brass plaque with their name at the entrance. Others have constructed new showplaces incorporating elements of the national heritage. The Finns, international style setters, debuted a modernistic dazzler in 1994 that makes everyone else's embassy look somewhat old-fashioned. Two chubby marble elephants stand at the entrance to one of India's missions.

A stately, elegant street, its quiet demeanor is frequently broken by the chanting voices and banging drums of a political or diplomatic demonstration. Typically, a crowd of angry expatriates or students is protesting some policy of their homeland government. The TV cameras zoom in for close-ups, and the Metropolitan Police keep alert. If you chance upon a protest, take a moment to

find out what the hubbub is about. At other times, fleets of limos clog the avenue when an embassy—usually celebrating a homeland holiday—throws a big party and invites its diplomatic neighbors.

1 Washington National Cathedral (3101 Wisconsin Ave. NW)

A gothic dazzler, nearly a century in construction, the massive Episcopalian cathedral is an appropriately foreign-looking starting point for this international walkabout. Odd as it may seem, the place to find the sculpted head of Darth Vador, the "Star Wars" villain, is on the facade as are more than 3,000 hand-carved gargoyles and other statuary. This Episcopal cathedral looks like something out of 14th-century England. It is generally regarded as the country's finest example of Gothic architecture, built of grayish Indiana limestone with flying buttresses, a trio of soaring towers, sparkling stained glass, pointed arches, ribbed vaulting, and lots of wrought iron. It's the sixth largest cathedral in the world.

But why Gothic in America? Presumably for its imposing aura. Begun in 1907, the cathedral essentially was completed 83 years later in 1990. I live in the neighborhood and pass by nearly every day, always awed by its majesty and yet puzzled why the church leaders didn't choose a more innovative design representative of the can-do American spirit of their day. But Gothic it is, and happily they saw that the work was done right. Inside and out, it is a marvel. If you've never been to Europe, the cathedral provides a taste of what you have missed.

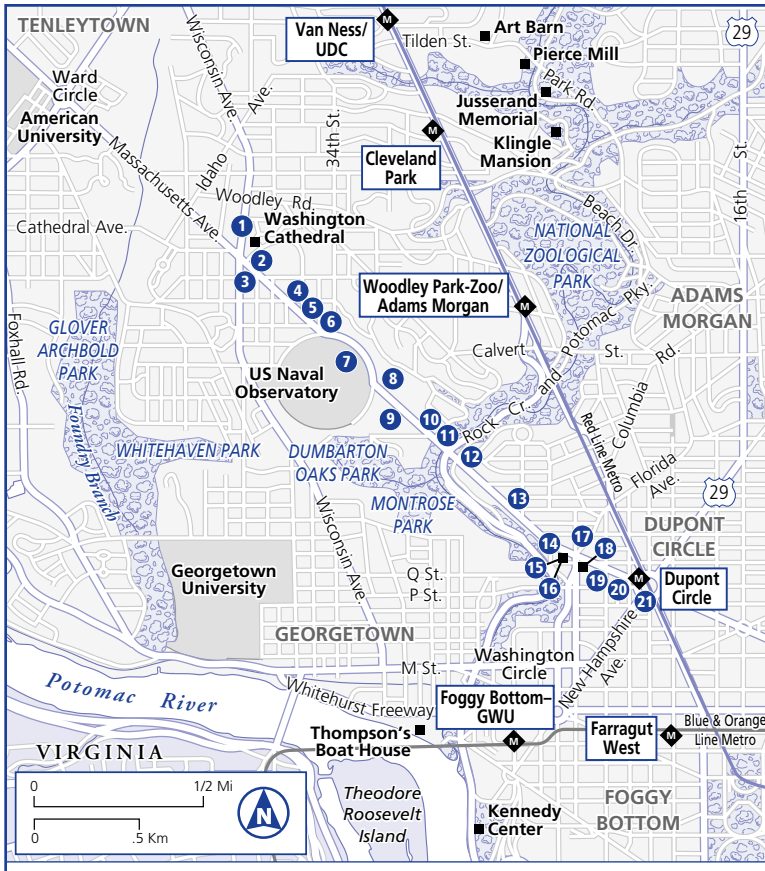
Take a self-guided tour described in the cathedral brochure (25¢). Or join one of the escorted 30-minute tours ($3 adults, $1 children), offered frequently Monday through Saturday from 10 to 11:30am and 12:45 to 3:30pm and on Sunday from 12:45 to 2:30pm. One-hour "Behind the Scenes Tours" ($10) are scheduled 10:30am and 1:30pm Monday through Friday. Forty-five-minute "Gargoyle Tours" ($5) are scheduled for 2pm on the fourth Sunday of the month from April to October and at 6:30pm on the fourth Thursday from May to July. Bring binoculars. If you simply want to enter and walk around, there's a suggested visitor donation of $3 for adults, $2 seniors, $1 children. It's open Sunday 8am to 6:30pm, Monday though Friday 10am to 5:30pm, and Saturday 10am to 4:30pm.

Keep in mind as you progress through the building that the theme of all of the decorative elements—glass, iron, polished wood, statuary, and embroidered fabrics—is the Christian story of creation. The carved works just above the three main entrance doors at the **West Facade** show the creation of day, the creation of humankind, and the creation of night. The story continues the length of the cathedral to the **High Altar,** where 110 small figures of men and women exemplifying the highest of Christian ideals surround the figure of "Christ in Majesty."

But before you enter, take a close look at the front of the building. On your left is the Tower of St. Peter; on your right, the Tower of St. Paul. They rise to 232 feet. Below the towers is a row of 70 windows, indicating the **Pilgrim Observation Gallery.** Once inside, take the elevator up for a view of the city.

Extending from the exterior walls are dozens of gargoyles and "grotesques," carved mostly in the shape of whimsical and friendly creatures. Above and on the

Walking Tour: Embassy Row



1. Washington National Cathedral
2. St. Albans School
3. Bishop Aimilianos Lalousis Park
4. St. Nicholas Cathedral
5. Embassy of Norway Residence
6. Embassy of Finland
7. Vice President's Residence/ U.S. Naval Observatory
8. Rock Creek Trail
9. British Embassy
10. Kahlil Gibran Memorial
11. Rock Creek Park
12. The Islamic Center
13. Statue of Robert Emmet
14. Sheridan Circle
15. Letelier/Moffitt Memorial
16. Statue of Tomas G. Masaryk
17. Cosmos Club
18. Anderson House
19. Statue of Mahatma Gandhi
20. Embassy of Indonesia
21. Dupont Circle

A Word on the Route

I have started this tour at the upper end of Embassy Row. Catch the Metrobus up Massachusetts Avenue from Dupont Circle and walk back downhill to where you started. Sure, you can do the reverse, but downhill is easier. Wide sidewalks line both sides of the street; I recommend walking on the left. It's the shadier side. At three stops, you may choose to cross over and back. You will pass numerous embassies on this route, but to see more look for the national flags of other embassies located on side streets a few steps to the left or right.

Embassies are not normally open to visitors. Some do organize art shows and concerts featuring homeland artists. For example, the Embassy of Finland at 3301 Massachusetts Ave. NW schedules two art shows annually, advertising them in a banner stripped across the front of the building. The *City Paper,* a free tabloid newspaper, lists embassy shows in its Thursday "Galleries" column. Take advantage of these shows to step inside for a look at the embassy itself.

left of the left-hand door is the Greek god Pan, portrayed as a curly-haired faun with his pipes. All but impossible to see without binoculars is the sculpted head of **Darth Vader.** This fearful "Star Wars" villain was the choice of a young winner in a national design-a-grotesque or gargoyle contest the cathedral held. These creatures are part of the cathedral's gutter system, built to keep rainwater from running down the walls. (They project the water away from the walls through pipes.) Grotesques like Vader deflect the flow, which bounces off the tops of their heads.

On entering the cathedral Nave, turn and look behind you and up to the west window, called the **Creation Rose.** The window is 26 feet in diameter and contains more than 10,500 pieces of hand-blown glass. Many pieces are faceted to produce a sparkle, especially when the mid-afternoon sun beams through. The cathedral claims, justifiably I think, that it is one of the finest 20th-century rose windows in the world. The window tells the story of creation in the abstract. A center of white glass represents the Biblical phrase, "Let there be light." Panels of red, gold, and blue radiate from the center, suggesting to parishioners that all creation comes from the Christian God. More than 200 separate stained glass windows adorn the cathedral. A printed handout at the information desk describes each set of windows in detail.

As you proceed toward the altar, take note of the 16th-century tapestries in **St. Mary's Chapel** on the left. They tell the story of David and Goliath. Opposite it on the right side is the **Children's Chapel,** where everything is built to the scale of a 6-year-old. The mini-chapel's kneelers feature embroidered baby animals, and wrought iron figures depict fantasy creatures. At the **Canterbury Pulpit,** between the two chapels, the massive piers soar nearly 100 feet to the vaulting. The sculptured figures on the pulpit portray people

and scenes involved in translating the Bible into English. Stones for the pulpit came from Canterbury Cathedral in England.

On the right of the Nave is the cathedral's **Great Organ.** Brief demonstrations are given Monday and Wednesday at 12:30pm. Those sitting in the lovely carved dark oak choir stalls are apt to get blasted if the organist plays a rambunctious piece.

On the right side of the cathedral, visit the **Bishop's Garden,** modeled on a medieval walled garden. Within the walls are two herb gardens, a rose garden, perennial borders, and medieval architectural elements. Guided tours are offered at 10:30am Wednesday from April to October, starting in the adjacent Herb Cottage. Nearby Olmsted Woods is a 5-acre old growth forest of oak and beech. A path called **Pilgrim's Way** threads this glimpse of native trees and plants. Before you leave, get a drink of water and use the restrooms. Neither will be available until you get back at Dupont Circle.

On your left as you start down Embassy Row (south downhilll on Massachusetts Avenue) is:

2 St. Albans School

This is a private college preparatory school for young men that is affiliated with the National Cathedral. Close to 100 years old, it promotes a rigorous academic and athletic program for grades 4 to 12. Students also are expected to go to chapel twice a week. Both a day school and a boarding school, it has graduated an illustrious list of alumni—among them former Vice President Al Gore (Class of 1956). Young women attend the National Cathedral School, out of sight elsewhere on the cathedral grounds. That's where the Gores sent their daughters. Both schools are quite prestigious and are considered pipelines to Yale and Harvard. Tuition for day students at St. Albans is about $13,000 a year.

Directly across Massachusetts Avenue is one of the many small parks that adorn the city and Embassy Row. Like this one, they tend to be triangular in shape, created by diagonal avenues (Wisconsin/Massachusetts) cutting across the regular street grid.

Continue one block downhill to:

3 Bishop Aimilianos Lalousis Park

Another triangular park, it hosts a stone monument dedicated to Father Lalousis. From 1934 to 1954, he was pastor at Saint Sophia Greek Orthodox Church, which the park faces. He went on to become the bishop of the Dioceses of Chicago and Charlotte-Atlanta. But he is remembered here for his determined effort to build a Greek Orthodox Cathedral in the nation's capital. In 1956, President Eisenhower placed the cornerstone for the triple-domed structure overlooking the park. The congregation, which raised the funds, aimed for a big church like St. Sophia in Istanbul, one of the church's most famous cathedrals. Though not as big, the local structure was designed in 9th-century Byzantine church style. It points to the east, and its floor plan resembles a cross. The large central dome carries an image of Jesus surrounded by angels. Walls and ceilings are adorned with colorful mosaics of saints and archangels. Installation of the mosaics proved a 30-year task, supervised by Byzantine art scholars from Harvard University. For a peek inside the ornate interior, walk around the left side of the building to the cathedral office (Mon–Fri 9am–5pm; Sat 9am–4pm). Services are held from 9am to noon on Sunday.

Two blocks south is:

4 St. Nicholas Cathedral (3500 Massachusetts Ave.)

The large domed structure on the opposite side of the street is the national cathedral for the Orthodox Church of America. The parish was founded in 1930 to perpetuate the memory of the Russians who gave their lives for their country and their faith during World War I and the Russian Revolution. The building itself was dedicated in 1962 as the church's National War Memorial Shrine. Ornate icons created in the traditional Russian style by artists from Moscow decorate the interior. Many recount the founding of the Orthodox Church in this country. Note the elegant bell tower in front, dedicated in 1988. The cathedral is generally open to visitors Monday through Friday from 10am to 4pm. To enter, go to the rear and ring the office intercom button. A member of the staff will give you a tour and provide you with informational pamphlets. Services are held on Sunday in English at 9am; in Slavonic at 10:45am. If you choose to tour, take care in crossing Massachusetts Avenue.

On the next block, take a glance left at the Embassy of Cape Verde (3415 Massachusetts), representing the tiny West African island nation. Maintaining a Washington embassy is expensive, and not every nation occupies a palatial mansion. Next move on to the neighboring and opulent:

5 Embassy of Norway Residence (2720 34th St. NW)

In front, one of the city's rare statues of a woman honors Crown Princess Martha of Norway (1901–1954). Erected in 2005, Martha is shown elegantly but conservatively dressed in a light coat and jaunty hat; her stride is purposeful, as if she were heading for an important diplomatic function. Her right hand is raised. She could be hailing a cab, but I prefer to think she's giving a friendly wave to the passing cars. I'm always tempted to wave back.

Born in Stockholm, Sweden to Prince Carl of Sweden and Princess Ingeborg of Denmark, she married Crown Prince Olav of Norway in 1929. In 1940 when German troops occupied Norway, she and the Royal couple's three children fled first to her native Sweden. But the Swedes gave her a cool welcome, fearing that her presence jeopardized Sweden's neutrality. Learning of her plight, President Roosevelt, with whom she had formed a friendship, invited Martha and the children to Washington as the guests of the U.S. Government. For weeks, they resided in the White House, where President Roosevelt delighted in Martha's company. His obvious fondness for her—she often was in his company—sparked rumors of a romance. Who knows? While in America, Martha worked unceasingly on behalf of Norway, seeking support from the U.S. government and the American people for the occupied nation. After the war, she got a hero's welcome in Norway, where she was proclaimed a "mother of the nation." Sadly, she never became queen. After several illnesses, she died in 1954 of hepatitis three years before her husband became king. The statue was a gift from the Norwegian American Foundation to King Harold of Norway (Martha's son) and to the Norwegian government "in memory of the king's mother and her outstanding contribution to the war effort of the Norwegians in exile during World War II." What you are looking at behind the statue is the ambassador's residence. Around the corner in the rear is the chancery. At the entrance is a pair of abstract sculptures worth a look.

Note the Embassy of the Vatican (3339) as you pass by it. A few steps beyond, where the avenue begins its curve around Observatory Circle, stands the architecturally dramatic:

6 Embassy of Finland (3301 Massachusetts Ave.)

The metal and glass front, another abstract creation, forms a green wall of climbing plants on a bronze, gridlike trellis. Within, huge windows in the rear look out onto a thickly forested slope, as if—to quote architectural historian William Morgan—"The Finns have brought a bit of the woods to Washington." The architects, Mikko Heikkinen and Markku Komonen, are considered one of Finland's hottest architectural partnernships. Completed in 1994, the embassy was designed to display the life and culture of Finland. To see the interior, attend one of the two annual art shows displaying Finnish artworks. You can get a very limited glimpse by stepping into the all-glass reception—if only to pick up a tourist brochure for Finland. The embassy is open Monday through Friday from 8:30am to 4:45pm.

7 Vice President's Residence/U.S. Naval Observatory (Massachusetts Avenue at 34th Street)

From the Finnish Embassy, look across the street to the green slope behind the tall iron fence. That white Victorian-style house atop the hill partially visible through the leafy trees is Number One Observatory Circle, the official residence of the U.S. vice president. As I write this, it is home to Richard and Lynne Cheney. The wooded estate surrounding the residence is the site of the U.S. Naval Observatory; the large white dome holding its 12-inch refracting telescope is easily seen on the right.

> *"An embassy in Washington D.C. is different from embassies in most other capitals, where people visit them only if they have to; that is, to get a visa or to conduct official business. In Washington D.C., embassies are expected to be much more. They need to be able to open windows on the life and culture of the countries they represent, not only for the select few, but for all Washingtonians and visitors to the capital who want to know. Many do, because Americans are curious by nature."*
>
> —Jukka Valtasaari, Finnish ambassador, 1988–1996 and 2001–2005

Built in 1893, the Veep's house initially was assigned to the observatory's superintendent. But in 1923 the Chief of Naval Operations took a liking to it, booted out the superintendent and made the house his home. In 1974, Congress evicted the Navy and transformed it into the vice president's residence.

Up to that time, vice presidents occupied their own homes, as Supreme Court judges, Cabinet members, and senators still do. But providing full security apparatus for the private homes of each new vice president became expensive. Nelson Rockefeller, vice president in the Gerald Ford administration, was the first potential resident, but he used the house only for entertaining. So Vice President Walter Mondale became the first official occupant, followed by the elder Bush, Quayle, and Gore. The Cheneys, like previous residents, have decorated it with their own furnishings. They also display American art on loan from

Tours of the Observatory

Public tours of the observatory (but not the vice president's residence) are offered, but you won't be able to take advantage on this walkabout. They are scheduled on selected Monday evenings from 8:30 to 10pm. Visitors learn about the observatory's timekeeping responsibilities and (weather permitting) take a look at the night sky through the telescope. Make a request for free tickets at least 4 to 6 weeks in advance. Do so either online at www.usno.navy.mil/tour_info.shtml or by fax to the Public Affairs Office at 202/762-1489.

museums, seen by a parade of visitors ranging from school children to world leaders. If you see a big tent on the front lawn, it usually means the vice president is hosting a gala reception. Traffic along Massachusetts Avenue is brought to a halt many mornings and afternoons when the vice president's security motorcade races past carrying him to or from his offices at the White House or U.S. Capitol.

The observatory moved from Foggy Bottom to its present location in 1910. At the time, the hilltop site was rural countryside. One of the oldest scientific agencies in the country, it was established in 1830. Its primary mission was to oversee the Navy's chronometers, charts, and other navigational equipment. Today it remains the preeminent authority on precise time. Scientists take observations of the sun, moon, planets, and selected stars; determine the precise time, and publish astronomical data needed for accurate navigation.

On your left as you continue around Observatory Circle (a wide curve in Embassy Row) is a steep, heavily wooded slope that drops into a slender canyon. It is:

8 Rock Creek Trail

Look for a National Park Service trail marker. It directs you to three hiking trails. Take the Rock Creek Trail, a slender, hard-packed path that meanders gently downhill through the woods. Follow it for maybe 100 yards, and then retrace your steps. I've sent you on this detour to make a point. Note how quickly—within 60 seconds—you leave the hubbub of the city and find yourself in a semi-wilderness that could be 100 miles from Embassy Row. This trail is just one example of the miles of maintained and well-used pathways that trace Washington's abundant parklands.

Re-emerging from the woods, look (but don't walk) across Massachusetts Avenue to the sprawling complex occupied by the:

9 British Embassy (3100 Massachusetts Ave.)

Out in front and instantly recognizable in a familiar pose, **Sir Winston Churchill** stands in bronze. One foot rests on Embassy property, thus British soil; the other is planted on American soil. Anglo-American unity is the symbolism, but the placement also reflects

Churchill's heritage as the child of a British father and American mother. A portly figure—and 9 feet in height here—he is dressed (bow tie, jacket, and vest) for the office, presumably as prime minister at No. 10 Downing Street. His right hand is raised, giving the familiar V for Victory sign he displayed in World War II. In his left hand, he holds the inevitable cigar and the cane he used in his later years. His cigar hand often sports a small bouquet of fresh flowers, left by admirers. The English-Speaking Union of the United States commissioned the statue, which was erected in 1966. The cigar upset some members who considered it undignified. But the organization concluded a cigar really is part of his identity, and it stayed. The statue stands on a granite plinth; beneath it are blended soils from Blenheim Palace, his birthplace; from the rose garden at Chartwell, his home; and from his mother's home in Brooklyn, N.Y.

The U-shaped, red-brick structure rising behind the World War II prime minister is the main chancery, built in 1931. Sir Edwin Lutyens, one of Great Britain's leading architects of the day, designed both it and the ambassador's residence, located out of sight behind the chancery. The American Institute of Architects describes the pair as a "triumph," noting that Lutyens rejected the prevailing passion for neoclassical structures and instead created a colonial American design. Others suggest it looks like an 18th-century English country house. Whatever, it makes an impressive show. Too bad the concrete box on the right, an office building dedicated by Queen Elizabeth II in 1957, failed to match the architectural standard Lutyens set. The round glass structure, another unfortunately bland modern addition, is used for conferences.

Take a Break

No cafes, shops, or any other commercial establishments are located on this entire walk. Their absence is one of the charms of what is considered Washington's most beautiful street. Even the side streets, which are residential, are commerce free. I recommend that you pack bottles of water and, if you choose, a picnic lunch. You will find Stop 10, the Kahlil Gibran Memorial, an appealing place to rest. Backing up to woodlands, it's shady, somewhat quiet and offers places to sit comfortably. At Dupont Circle prior to the tour, you can purchase large gourmet sandwiches and beverages at **Kramer Books & Afterwards Café** (1517 Connecticut Ave. NW; ☎ 202/387-1400; 7:30am–1am). Or buy do-it-yourself picnic ingredients a few steps away at **Marvelous Market** (1511 Connecticut Ave. NW; ☎ 202/332-3690; Mon–Sat 8am–9pm, Sun 7:30am–7pm). Easily accessible restrooms are available just across the Rock Creek Park bridge at the Islamic Center.

On the left a few steps beyond the Rock Creek Trail, you can't miss the:

10 Kahlil Gibran Memorial

An elaborate 2-acre garden, eight-sided star fountain, circular walkway, shaded benches, and bronze bust celebrate the life and achievements of the Lebanese-American philosopher. Dedicated on May 24, 1991, it is a gift "to the people of the United States" from the Kahlil Gibran Centennial Foundation. Born in 1883 in a village near the Bibilical Cedars of Lebanon, Gibran arrived in Boston as a child. Building a successful career as artist and author, he published widely-quoted books in English and Arabic. He died in New York City in 1931. Excerpts from his writings are etched into the memorial's circular

wall, among them: "We live only to discover beauty. All else is a form of waiting."

En route to the next stop, you will pass a cluster of embassies. Down the avenue, the Middle-Eastern looking structure with the decaying green-tiled dome is the former **Imperial Embassy of Iran** (3005). Though contemporary in look, the 1960 structure's facade is decorated with a centuries-old kind of adornment called faience. Turquoise blue, red, black, and gold in color, the mosaic-like work (commonly but incorrectly described as tile) displays an ancient pomegranate motif. Faience is used both inside and outside of Iranian structures; turquoise is considered the country's national gem. Across the avenue, the gray-tiled roof gives a Latin look to the **Embassy of Bolivia** (3012). Neighboring it, the big modern black glass box on stilts is the chancery of the **Embassy of Brazil** (3006). The statelier, palace-like building on its left (3000) is the ambassador's residence. The older building, derived from an Italian Renaissance palazzo, was designed in 1931 by John Russell Pope, a leader of the city's early 20th-century neoclassicist movement. The Jefferson Memorial, National Gallery of Art, and National Archives are among Pope's other local works. Around the corner, the massive angular structure at 3000 Whitehaven St. NW is the new **Embassy of Italy.** A contemporary, even avant-garde version of the Renaissance palazzos of Tuscany, its soaring interior courtyard hosts numerous diplomatic receptions. I watched the embassy being built and was disappointed in the result. The mostly blank yellow wall facing toward Embassy Row seems uncharacteristically remote and unfriendly—not at all like the Italy I've visited. Sen. Hillary Clinton (D-NY) resides on Whitehaven near the embassy.

Watch out now for:

11 Rock Creek Park

You get a dizzying view of a small portion of 1,700-acre Rock Creek Park (See Chapter 7, p. 163) when you cross the 420-foot-long bridge above its deep gorge. Seventy-five feet below is Rock Creek, a swift-flowing stream that is known to overflow during heavy rainstorms. Paralleling it are Rock Creek Parkway, a busy commuter route that park fans would like removed, and Rock Creek Trail, a 15-mile hiking and bicycling path. The **Charles C. Glover Memorial Bridge** is named for a leading bank president and financier who in the 1880s was instrumental in getting Congress to create the park.

Next continue a few steps south to:

12 The Islamic Center (2551 Massachusetts Ave.)

The 160-foot tall white limestone minaret, soaring above Embassy Row, makes the Islamic Center impossible to miss. From it, a loudspeaker intones the call to prayer five times daily. Built in 1949, the center faces Mecca. On Friday afternoons, throngs of the faithful pour into the mosque for prayer services, many of them embassy employees attired in their native dress. At times, prayer rugs are spread in the courtyard or even on the sidewalk outside the iron railing fence. This is when Embassy Row takes on its most dramatic multicultural look. Visitors are welcome inside (daily 10am–5pm), so don't be shy about stepping through the open gates. But be sure to remove your shoes before entering the mosque itself; leave them in one of the slots provided on the entrance wall. Men should dress neatly; no shorts. Women are not allowed to wear sleeveless clothes or short dresses and must cover their hair. The interior, filled with colorful Arabic

art, is well worth these preliminaries. Persian rugs drape the floor, overlapping one another; 7,000 blue tiles cover the lower walls in mosaic patterns; eight ornate pillars soar overhead, ringing a huge copper chandelier. The carved pulpit is inlaid with ivory, and stained-glass windows add more color. When you leave, take a look at the center's bookstore (to the left of the entrance), which sells a variety of religious items.

Note the numerous embassies en route to the next stop. On the left is the new **Embassy of Turkey** (2525). Like the Italian Embassy, it is contemporary, but discreetly so, blending more with its older neighbors than what the Italians built. The statue in front is of Mustafa Kemel Ataturk, the founder of modern Turkey. A revolutionary, he led the fight to abolish the ancient sultanate that governed the Ottoman Empire, establishing the Turkish Republic. A virtual dictator, his 15 years of rule forced the "westernization" of the country, dragging it from the past into the present. In the process, he disestablished Islam as the state religion, and Turkey today remains a secular nation. At the end of the block is the **Embassy of the Kingdom of Lesotho** (2511). Across the avenue, two marble elephants guard the **India Supply Mission** (2536). Above them, a strip of blue squares across the front of the building serve as a backdrop to a white water lily, symbolizing peace and tranquility, and a wheel, which represents the continuous cycle of life. Its neighbor is the **Embassy of Japan** (2516). The structure set back behind the cobblestone courtyard dates to 1932. Georgian revival in style, it suggests the Far East with a subtle "rising sun" above the balcony over the door.

In the 2400 block of Massachusetts Avenue, the cluster of embassies grows tighter. Walk on to Massachusetts Avenue and 24th Street where you'll see the:

⓭ Statue of Robert Emmet

Though somewhat obscured by foliage, the Irish revolutionary stands in a pose that he reportedly struck in Dublin in 1803 when a British court sentenced him to death by hanging. He appears to be gazing toward the Embassy of Ireland 2 blocks away. Born in 1778, Emmet devoted his short life to Irish independence, leading a failed uprising in Dublin on July 23, 1803. The statue was presented to the Smithsonian Institution in 1917 as a gift to the American public from a group of American citizens of Irish ancestry. It was moved to its present site, a triangular park, in 1966, marking the 50th anniversary of Irish independence. On the pedestal are inscribed excerpts from remarks he made at his trial: "I wished to procure for my country the guarantees which Washington procured for America."

More embassies line the route to the next stop. Make a stop in front of the **Embassy of Croatia** (2343), where the muscular figure of St. Jerome the Priest (A.D. 341–420) sits hunched over a book, his head in his hand. This is, I understand, a studious pose; after all, the pedestal on which he sits proclaims him "the greatest Doctor of the Church." This is a reference to his work in translating the Bible from Hebrew into Latin, a version called the Vulgate because it was in the language of the common people of the day. Historically, it is considered the most important vernacular edition of the Bible. But to me, he looks like someone deeply troubled, as apparently he was at

various times in his life. At times in his younger years, his religious faith declined; he became involved in numerous theological disputes, and he spent several years in the desert leading an ascetical life while fighting temptations. The statue initially sat on the grounds of the Franciscan Abbey near Catholic University. But it was moved here when the nation of Croatia was created at the breakup of Yugoslavia. I pass the statue nearly everyday, hoping he will look up with a smile.

You'll now find yourself at:

14 Sheridan Circle

The Civil War officer mounted on his muscular horse is General Philip H. Sheridan, commander of the Union cavalry and the Army of the Shenandoah. His horse Rienzi, who carried him through 85 battles and skirmishes, became almost as famous during the war as "the steed that saved the day." Sculpted by Gutzon Borglum, who carved the presidential faces on South Dakota's Mount Rushmore, the statue depicts Sheridan rallying his men at the Battle of Cedar Creek in Northern Virginia on October 19, 1864. Sheridan was 15 miles north in the town of Winchester when a Confederate force under General Jubal A. Early surprised and drove back his army. Racing to the battle site on stout-hearted Rienzi, Sheridan led his men in a victorious counterattack. The battle is commemorated at Cedar Creek & Belle Grove National Historical Park near Middletown, Virginia. Sheridan's wife is said to have chosen the site for the statue, which is flanked by two hidden pools. His son, Second Lieutenant Philip H. Sheridan, Jr., served as a model for the statue. He was present at the unveiling in 1908, as was President Theodore Roosevelt. I suggest crossing (carefully) into the circle to get a close-up look.

Watch for more embassies as you move on to the next stop. On the right side of the circle, be sure to take a look at the **Residence of the Embassy of Turkey** (just off the circle at 1606 23rd St. NW). Constructed in 1914, the building was commissioned by Edward Hamlin Everett, a wealthy Cleveland industrialist who invented the fluted bottle cap. If you could step inside, you would find an Italianate ballroom, English dining room, and French drawing room. This fancy interior earned it the nickname "San Simeon on the Potomac," a reference to the ornate castle publisher William Randolph Hearst built on the California coast. Opposite the Turkish residence is the **Embassy of Romania Chancery** (1607 23rd St.).

On the right side of the avenue, next to the curb outside the Romanian Chancery and the **Embassy of Ireland** (2234), is the:

15 Letelier/Moffitt Memorial

A small cylindrical monument, it honors the two victims of a Sept. 21, 1976 car bombing at Sheridan Circle blamed on Chilean secret police: Orlando Letelier, who had served as foreign minister in the ousted government of President Salvador Allende of Chile, and his colleague Ronni Karpen Moffitt.

Standing on the right in yet another triangular park (Massachusetts Avenue at 22nd Street NW), you'll see the:

16 Statue of Tomas G. Masaryk

Masaryk was the founder and president of the Republic of Czechoslovakia, serving from the break-up of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy at the end of World War I in 1918 until 1935. An inscription on the pedestal notes that he was inspired by Washington, Jefferson, Lincoln, and Wilson to found Czechoslovakia on the "ideals of free elections, rule of law and universal

suffrage." The statue was a 2002 gift to the United States from the Czech Republic and the American Friends of the Czech Republic.

Continue past the **Embassy of Estonia** (2131) until you get to the:

⑰ Cosmos Club (2121 Massachusetts Ave.)

A prestigious private social club, it was founded in 1878 as a gathering place for scientists and public policy intellectuals. It is said to have inspired the creation of the National Geographic Society. Its first meeting was held in the home of John Wesley Powell, the soldier and explorer who first navigated the Colorado River through the Grand Canyon in a dory. Its membership over the years has included three presidents, two vice presidents, a dozen Supreme Court justices, 32 Nobel Prize winners, 56 Pulitzer Prize winners, and 45 recipients of the Presidential Medal of Freedom. The club is the latest occupant of the French-inspired chateau, which was built in 1901 with the railroad wealth of Richard and Mary Scott Townsend. His fortune came from the Erie Line; hers from the Pennsylvania Railroad. They hired the famed New York architectural firm of Carrere & Hastings, which created the New York Public Library, to build a chateau built to resemble the Petit Trianon—the royal hideaway at Versailles. Somewhat superstitious, the couple had the structure built around an older one. Apparently, a gypsy had once predicted that Mrs. Townsend would die "under a new roof."

Look across the street to:

⑱ Anderson House (2118 Massachusetts Ave.)

Larz Anderson, an American diplomat, and his wife Isabel Weld Perkins, author and Red Cross volunteer, took advantage of their immense Boston wealth to build a lavish Washington palace. They used it 3 months of the year to entertain the cream of local society. A childless couple, they bequeathed it to the Society of the Cincinnati, of which Larz was a member. Today it is the society's headquarters as well as a museum to the splendor of the Gilded Age. It's open Tuesday through Saturday between 1 and 4pm (☎ 202/785-2040; www.thesocietyofthecincinnati.addr.com/anderson.htm; donation requested). The membership of the society, founded in 1783, is composed of male descendants of officers in George Washington's Continental Army.

The building itself, sporting a cavernous two-story ballroom, a dining room seating 50, grand staircase, massive wall murals, acres of marble, and 23-karat gold trim, is more palatial than Hillwood, Washington's other palace museum. But the Andersons couldn't match Marjorie Merriweather Post's astute and energetic collecting of European treasures. The Andersons bought lots of nice objects on their world travels, but they are of only slight interest. If you have time for only one palace, make it Hillwood (p. 128).

Look up and you'll see the:

⑲ Statue of Mahatma Gandhi

Striding purposefully, the man who led India to freedom from British rule in 1947 seems to be headed (aptly) for the **Embassy of India** (2107), just across the adjacent side street. He is dressed simply—bare-chested, sandals, a cloak draped across his shoulders—as he was in life. The statue is a recent gift of the people of India and the Indian-American community.

Across the avenue is the:

20 Embassy of Indonesia (2020 Massachusetts Ave.)

The ornate structure occupied today by the Embassy of Indonesia is said to have cost $3 million when it was built in 1903, the city's most expensive house at the time. The man who commissioned its construction, Thomas Walsh, came to the United States from Ireland in 1869 at the age of 19. He headed west, and in 1876 struck it rich in the Black Hills Gold Rush. A second gold strike increased his wealth, and he moved his family to Washington, figuring a grand 60-room mansion was the way to make a splash in society. He is said to have buried a piece of gold ore in the porch. At his death, his daughter Evalyn Walsh McLean declined to move in. She is noted for purchasing the legendary Hope Diamond, on display at the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History. Indonesia purchased the mansion in 1951 for $350,000.

21 Dupont Circle

This walkabout concludes at the city's liveliest traffic circle. You can rest at a shady park bench, and then seek lunch and a cool drink at any of the many cafes and pubs in the neighborhood. I profile the Dupont Circle/Kalorama neighborhood more fully in Chapter 2 (p. 21).

9 Attention Shoppers!

When you've seen enough of the city's museum treasures, take a look at the shopping goodies to carry home as a souvenir.

IF SOUVENIR SHOPPING IS YOUR PASSION, WASHINGTON IS THE PLACE FOR you. The city's shops boast quality souvenirs to delight friends and family or send you off into raptures of nostalgia for years to come. Many will be found in the outstanding museum shops that dot the city and are filled with unique, not necessarily expensive items, perfect for a gift or keepsake. As an international capital, Washington has also seen a small boom of shops displaying ethnic clothing, crafts, and artworks—fun to see even if your budget says "No, don't do it." You're into politics? In the capital of American politics, check out a political memorabilia outlet. See badges, posters, and life-size cutouts of politicians you love or love to hate.

For anything else, however, Washington is *not* much of a shopper's paradise, particularly if you're looking for budget fashions for the family or for something intrinsically "Washington." The city doesn't make or grow much of anything except reports, studies, regulations, laws, and a lot of hot air. The most significant manufacturing plant is the Bureau of Engraving and Printing, which spits out U.S. paper currency by the millions. Buy as many dollar bills as you want, but there's no discount for bulk purchases.

But whether souvenirs are your goal, or something else, at least some of you are going to want to shop, and I'm here to guide you to the best the city offers.

WHERE TO SPEND

Odd as it may seem, Washington does not have a major downtown shopping street. It disappeared (becoming office space) in the '60s and '70s when the population plummeted from a high of more than 800,000 to about 582,000 today. Most who left headed for the suburbs, and the big department stores either followed them to fancy malls or went bust. Downtown Washington supports one authentic department store (clothing, cosmetics, appliances, home furnishings). Until the fall of 2006 it was called Hecht's, but now it has become a Macy's. Some day, the recent surge in downtown condominium construction may create a new "Main Street," but not anytime soon.

What Is the Best Washington Souvenir?

Even nonshoppers are tempted to take home a souvenir from a memorable trip. What should it be? You will find plenty of the standard tourist stuff: coffee mugs; miniature busts of Washington, Jefferson, and Lincoln; mini bronze replicas of the Washington Monument and the U.S. Capitol. But maybe you want something extra-special to remember your visit to the Nation's Capital—a souvenir with lasting value:

- Go to a book signing and get an autographed copy of a novel or nonfiction work by a local author whose work intrigues you.
- Buy a quality photo book of Washington that does justice to its monuments and memorials.
- Look in galleries for a small painting, piece of art glass, or other artwork created by a Washington artist.
- Choose a poster from a current museum show or sporting event you attended and when you get back home, have it framed.
- Take home a biography or history you will read from the Jefferson, Lincoln, or Roosevelt memorials or the National Archives or Supreme Court.
- And don't forget to pick up a Washington T-shirt. After $1 bills, they may be the city's second leading manufactured item. Nobody leaves the city without one.

So I'm going to take you to easy-to-reach neighborhood stores, where you will find offbeat items—hand-painted Italian pottery, chic hand-loomed garments from Asia, contemporary American crafts—while seeing hometown Washington beyond the ceremonial Mall. I'll also talk about the best shopping neighborhoods, really small villages within the city, all providing a choice of cafes, banks, drug stores and other mini-"Main Street" outlets. With so much museum art, Washington also supports an artist's colony, and I'll show you where to find some of the top galleries.

My task is also to help you find bargains—and I'll show you some spiffy consignment shops with bargain-basement prices—but also we'll take a look at some high-end shops—if only because the stuff they carry is pleasing to the eye. I'm convinced that even bargain hunters like a peek at what the rich and famous buy. I certainly do. My theory is: Even if you can't afford expensive goods, you can get ideas from them—maybe even duplicate something at an affordable price. And ideas are free. That's really quite a bargain.

And one more affordable reason to visit these shops: Many of the showrooms, especially at the upscale end, are architectural delights. It's interesting to see how different designers turn the interiors of the city's slender old row houses into exciting spaces.

WASHINGTON'S 8 TOP SHOPPING/ BROWSING AREAS

FOR A SPLURGE: GEORGETOWN

The place where it is the most fun to shop—well, browse—and where you will find the largest concentration of intriguing stores is **Georgetown** (Wisconsin Avenue and M Street NW; K Street Circulator Bus or Metrobus [30], [32], [34], [35], [36]). Saturday is the big day, drawing throngs of Washingtonians checking out what's new. But most places are open daily, usually from about 10 or 11 in the morning to 9 or 10 in the evening. On Sunday, noon to six is fairly standard. If you are a savvy shopper, you're likely to find some bargains in the lineup of men's and women's clothing. But for the most part prices tend to be on the high side. Though Washington isn't noted for cutting-edge fashion, Georgetown is where you will find not only name designer wear but the funkiest, hippest, and even most outrageous attire in the city. Need a proper belly-dancing costume? You'll find it here. Nearly one entire block is devoted to antique shops; another is lined with chic furniture stores displaying the latest international styles.

The heart of Georgetown's shopping district is the intersection of Wisconsin Avenue and M Street. A shopping excursion might first take you about 4 blocks up Wisconsin (north) and then back, beginning and ending at M Street. When I say up, I mean it literally; you climb steady from the valley of the Potomac River. This is where younger shoppers with tighter budgets will find fashions more to their liking. A number of the shops are local branches of European chains; though generally expensive, they display items you might never see at home. The second phase of a shopping trip might tackle M Street—first east from Wisconsin 2 blocks and back and then west from Wisconsin 3 blocks and back. This is where you will find higher-end boutiques appealing to executives, lawyers, and diplomats of both sexes.

THE 'NEW' DOWNTOWN: FRIENDSHIP HEIGHTS/ CHEVY CHASE

This is Washington's new "Main Street," even though it is located on the northern edge of the city, and Maryland claims half of it. **Friendship Heights/Chevy Chase** (Metro: Friendship Heights) is what downtown used to look like—a stretch of 3 or 4 blocks on Wisconsin Avenue lined on each side with low-rise department stores, shops, cafes, banks, hair and skin salons, furniture stores, and other commercial outlets. Friendship Heights, the Washington end, offers more off-price shopping places—although Neiman-Marcus, the purveyor of luxury, shares their company. Chevy Chase, the Maryland half, is totally upscale, and getting more so all the time (see box below).

OFFBEAT AND FUNKY: PENN QUARTER/CHINATOWN

Though it's primarily an evening dining and entertainment strip, stretching for about 5 blocks, **Penn Quarter/Chinatown** (7th Street NW between D and I sts.; Metro: Gallery Place-Chinatown or Archives-Navy Memorial/Penn Quarter) has

attracted numerous offbeat shops and galleries that make for interesting shopping or browsing. Buy a deck for your skateboard, the proper garb for your martial arts class, or 18th-century Venetian glass trade beads. The neighborhood is one of the city's newest and hottest commercial hubs, spurred by the opening of the huge Verizon Center, a major sports arena. Giving it an additional boost was the reopening in July 2006 of the Smithsonian American Art Museum and National Portrait Gallery, which had been closed for renovation for 6 years (chapter 5, p. 117). Even if you don't shop, 7th Street is worth a look for its lineup of gorgeous, rehabilitated 19th-century structures. Brick sidewalks, old-fashioned street lamps, shade trees, and hanging baskets of flowers add to the Victorian look.

AROUND THE WORLD: ADAMS MORGAN

This is the neighborhood for shopping ethnic—Egyptian candies, Ethiopian ceremonial wear, Moroccan pottery, South American CDs. In the hour or two it takes to poke into these small, inexpensive places you will have made a virtual tour around the world. Because **Adams Morgan** (18th Street NW from P Street to Columbia Road; Metro: Dupont Circle) is a prime dining and entertainment area, you will find the shops mixed in among coffeehouses, pubs, dance clubs, and a large array of ethnic restaurants.

GALLERY CENTRAL: DUPONT CIRCLE

A city where lots of people have lots of money to spend can support a large and varied array of art galleries, which is the case in Washington. No single neighborhood dominates as the city's center for art, but **Dupont Circle** (Metro: Dupont Circle) comes close. More than a dozen galleries—painting, sculpture, photographs, prints—are clustered near the Circle, which not coincidentally is home to The Phillips Collection, one of the country's leading museums of modern art (see Chapter 5, p. 121). This is the neighborhood in which to go gallery hopping. Dupont Circle, a popular residential neighborhood for gays and lesbians, offers a well-stocked gay/lesbian book store.

THE VILLAGE: CAPITOL HILL

The people you see on the streets in Georgetown are likely to come from all over the Washington area. On the not-quite-so-thronged streets of **Capitol Hill** (Metro: Eastern Market), it's the Capitol Hill dwellers themselves who are out and about. On a Saturday—the best day to visit and to shop—the neighborhood takes on the look of a small town, a village as it were. Mixed in with the unusual shops (which include a hot sauce emporium, tribal art works from Tibet and Afghanistan, scented oils from Egypt) you will see the ordinary places—banks, hair dressers, pharmacies, dry cleaners—that serve the needs of residents. This is a fairly prosperous neighborhood of renovated row houses that is home to U.S. senators, representatives, their Capitol staff members, a Supreme Court justice, and lots of lobbyists. Work is just a short walk away.

ON THE EDGE: U STREET/14TH STREET NW

Up, down, and on its way up again—this is the history of **14th and U** (Metro: U Street–African-American Civil War Memorial/Cardozo), a neighborhood defined by the two intersecting streets. In the 1920s and '30s, U Street was the "Black

Shopping Hours and Sales Days

Local shops are generally open daily. Many begin the day at 10am, but others follow at 11am. A few, located in nightspot areas like Adams Morgan, delay opening until noon. Evening closings are similarly staggered. Almost everyone remains open until 6pm, but others continue on until 7, 8, 9, or even 10pm. There's no real pattern. On Sunday, noon to 6pm has become somewhat standard, but there are many exceptions. If you plan to window shop in the neighborhoods I describe in this chapter, don't get going until 11am to avoid too many closed doors.

Long weekend holidays—The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King's Birthday in January, President's Day in February, Memorial Day in May, Labor Day in September, Columbus Day in October as well as Veterans Day (Nov 12)—prompt local merchants to hold big sales. Most federal employees get these holidays off. Throughout the year, Lord & Taylor department store runs big sales ads in the *Washington Post* with clip-out, money-saving coupons. Before you shop, check the ads. January and September are the major sale months for almost every store.

Broadway," the upbeat nightlife center for African-Americans. By the '70s and '80s, it had become a derelict area of homeless street people, abandoned storefronts, and drugs. Now it's well on its way up again as a lively entertainment, shopping, and upscale condominium residential area. As the condominiums sprout along 14th Street, more shops and restaurants open to serve them. Look here for funky women's fashions, a well-stocked travel book store, a book store for political activists, high-styled housewares, and a growing number of art galleries. Still, if you follow the typical shopper's path—north on 14th Street from Thomas Circle, east and then west on U Street and south again on 14th Street—don't be surprised when you see boarded up buildings, a pawn shop, fried chicken carryouts, the Elizabeth Taylor Medical Center of the Whitman-Walker Clinic, and other public institutions organized to serve the poor and needy. This is the scruffiest of the shopping neighborhoods I've taken you to—an antidote to well-scrubbed Georgetown. But it's safe, and U Street in particular is a lively urban street serving mostly the everyday needs of nearby residents.

POTLUCK: DOWNTOWN

For me, downtown is roughly the rectangle formed by E to M Streets and 9th to 22nd Streets NW—the extended neighborhood edging the White House complex north, east, and west. Unfortunately, the shops are widely scattered. But this is where you find Macy's, Washington's only department store; a first-rate shop selling memorabilia from America's presidential election campaigns; a quaint little shop brimming with music boxes from around the world; and a pair of specialty bookshops marketing serious tomes on economics, science, medicine, and engineering.

MUSEUM SHOPS FOR OFFBEAT GIFTS AND SOUVENIRS

As a travel writer, I've plunged into literally hundreds of museums all over the world. Surely, I'm not the only patron who has concluded that in many of them, their shops are more interesting than their exhibits. But I'm not saying this is true in Washington. My point is that museum shops should not be overlooked. In a museum, you can only gaze at something that appeals to you. In a shop, you can pick it up, examine it, and maybe even take it home with you.

Each of the museums I cite here, even those in the Smithsonian family, offer a differing array of items—invariably reflecting the nature of the museum. In most, they are quality goods that you might not find elsewhere. Of course, every museum markets T-shirts with its own logo. They range in price from $14 to $24 for an adult size (compared to the generic Washington D.C. tees sold in sidewalk vendor stands at 3 for $10). My advice: Pay extra for a T-shirt touting your favorite museum. The cheap sidewalk vendor tees look cheap; the museum tees are classic, and they will mean more to you in the long run.

The location, hours, and nearest Metro station for the museums below are detailed in Chapter 5. All the museums have shelves of books, fiction and nonfiction, related to the museum's exhibits. And there's lots of kids stuff, too. Most items are moderately priced, but crafts by name artisans tend to be expensive. Credit cards (AE, MC, V) are welcomed at all of them. You pay no sales tax at the Smithsonian shops, which are nonprofit.

For Americana

It seems out of character for the repository of the U.S. Constitution and Declaration of Independence. But the **National Archives** sports a sense of humor. Along with copies of these basic documents, you also can buy a Benjamin Franklin finger puppet ($4.95). Its "We the People" T-shirts go for $18. For something more serious, take a look at a recent Archives picture book, "Eyewitness: American Originals from the National Archives" ($21). It presents 25 first-hand accounts of historic moments as reported in Archives documents. Example: Thomas Jefferson on diplomatic assignment in France gives his account of the start of the French Revolution in 1789.

Items related to the White House and its occupants, past and present, are offered at the **White House Visitor Center**. We decorate our Christmas tree in part with official White House ornaments. Since 1981, there's been a different one every year—still sold at this shop, operated by the White House Historical Association. My favorite of the ornaments is 2004, depicting a horse-drawn sleigh passing in front of the White House ($16). Other finds: A 500-piece White House puzzle ($15); a delightful White House book mark, depicting the Marine Band conductor in bright red jacket ($9.95); a CD featuring presidential campaign songs from 1789 to 1996 ($17).

Fancy items with a historical America theme are displayed at the **Decatur House**. The most appealing souvenirs are the reproductions of White House china. You can buy pieces from the administrations of Washington, Madison, Monroe, Pierce, Grant, and Polk, among others, festooned with flags, eagles, and shields. Cup and saucer go for $66, a bowl for $79, and a teapot for $123.

For Art Lovers

My wife and I favor modern and contemporary art, the heart of the collection of the Smithsonian's **Hirshhorn Museum** ☆. Look for books, calendars, greeting cards, note paper, and more featuring the top artists of the 20th century—Picasso, O'Keeffe, de Kooning, Miro, Hopper. Large posters of works in the museum make affordable substitutes for the real thing in your home ($18–$28).

Do you have a favorite Impressionist painter? At the **National Gallery of Art** ☆☆ (East and West buildings), you are likely to find an example of his or her work plastered on every gift item imaginable: greeting cards, post cards, note cards, calendars, soaps, scarves, ties, mugs, and on and on. The best buys are the small (8×11) framed prints of notable works in the museum ($35)—great for that odd wall in your home that needs a splash of color or culture. And at the **Phillips Collection** ☆, one of the world's most popular paintings, Renoir's *Luncheon of the Boating Party* has been imprinted on everything imaginable—puzzles, post-it notes, mouse pads, bookmarks, wrapping paper, and mugs. Renoir fans can indulge their *Boating Party* love affair with these souvenirs from where the painting itself hangs.

American Art is the focus, appropriately enough, at the gift store of the **American Art Museum.** First, view the elegant striped paintings of Washington-based artist Gene Davis in the galleries (Davis was a leader in the local "Color Field" of painting), then consider purchasing a silk multi-color striped scarf in the museum shop based on his works, an apt souvenir ($45). Another option: Gene Davis note cards ($16). Expensive, but fun to see is the carved wood Civil War chess set with the 6-inch figures of Abraham Lincoln and Jefferson Davis serving as opposing kings and their wives as queens ($350).

Best for Unique Gifts

The place to shop or browse for anyone who has been to Africa or is interested in going is the Smithsonian's **National Museum of African Art** ☆. Its shelves overflow with quality handmade crafts from throughout the continent. The items that first catch your eye as you enter the large display room are the stuffed, stand-up pink giraffes ($35–$50) from Madagascar. Check out the deep purple *titja* (dyed sisal) baskets from Swaziland ($15); beaded table utensils from South Africa ($25–$40); and colorful *Kisii* soapstone animal carvings from Kenya ($8.50).

Step into the Smithsonian's **Freer Gallery** ☆☆ for Japanese pottery and origami, picture books featuring Asian paintings, and CDs of traditional music performed by such groups as the Formosa Aboriginal Song & Dance Troupe. Men seeking a gift for a spouse or significant other should take a look at the jade bracelets ($66). The museum's T-shirt, displaying the gold peacocks of the museum's famed Peacock Room, rates as the city's most attractive souvenir tee (for women, $19). Next door, the Smithsonian's **Arthur M. Sackler Gallery** ☆☆ displays more Asian art in its huge, contemporary-looking shop—but with more of an emphasis on the jewelry and textiles of India. Chess players might be tempted by the chess set from Syria, handmade in the souks of Damascus and sporting mosaic inlay work ($165).

The prices of the high-quality Native American artifacts displayed on the main floor of the Smithsonian's **National Museum of the American Indian** ★★★ will take your breath away. Its Chesapeake Museum Store features the works of top artists—Navajo rugs, Hopi Kachina dolls, and Pueblo pottery at prices that climb from the low hundreds to as much as $8,500 (for a hand-made pot from New Mexico's San Ildefonso pueblo). You can climb to the second floor to visit the more affordable Roanoke Museum Store. You will find hand-made Navajo folk art, Zuni fetishes, and colorful Nicaraguan pottery bowls for under $80.

Only American crafts—carvings, glass, jewelry, textiles, pottery—are carried by the Smithsonian's **Renwick Gallery** ★★. These are hand-made, one-of-a-kind items, often from affordable emerging artists. Sea glass jewelry pieces fashioned with silver wire go for $15 to $125; multi-colored hand-blown glass salt and pepper shakers are $65.

Best for Toys

It takes three floors to display all the airplane and space ship merchandise marketed by the Smithsonian's **National Air and Space Museum** ★★★. Give yourself at least 30 minutes to see it all. On the main floor, the aspiring young pilot in your family might like the jaunty "Top Gun" jacket sporting lots of zippers and official looking patches ($68). For the toddler, how about a teddy bear dressed in an orange astronaut space suit ($12)? Upstairs, find aviation literature; downstairs, toys, airplane models, and spacecraft food—freeze-dried ice cream, anyone ($4)?

For the kids, you can't beat the stuffed animals in the Mammals Museum Store at the Smithsonian's **National Museum of Natural History** ★★★. Lions, monkeys, lemurs, zebras, giraffes, elephants, bison, cheetahs, hippos, and, of course, those cuddly black and white pandas—priced at $14 to $24. That's in just one of the museum's five shops. On the mezzanine, the Minerals Museum Store sells lots of rocks—literally. You also can buy costume jewelry patterned on the famed Hope Diamond; a pin ($85), earrings ($62). Foreign tourists go for a tiny vial of Colorado gold flakes floating in liquid ($8.50). On the museum's lower level, the Family Store is the place to buy dinosaur-related items, including a stuffed dino ($24). The Gallery Store features affordable crafts from around the world—African baskets, Central American pottery, and Japanese kimonos. More dinosaur items are sold in the Tricera Shop.

You'll find mostly kid stuff relating to deep sea creatures at the **National Aquarium.** Though small and haphazardly organized, the shop does have some finds. Tots go for the stuffed seals and other aquatic animals ($13). I liked the Toobs ($8.95), plastic tubes filled with 10 toy creatures; one features 10 kinds of sharks, another frogs and turtles, a third focuses on the Galapagos Islands.

If I were young again, I'd demand that my parents buy me building blocks from the Smithsonian's **National Building Museum** ★. In particular, I'd point to the Haba blocks (67 pieces, 18 shapes) that would allow me to construct my own personal U.S. Capitol ($50). Find books on all aspects of architecture here, including home design. One room is devoted to high-design, inexpensive kitchenware.

And More

Other great bets for unique souvenirs include:

- Books about Thomas Jefferson and the Founding Fathers at the **Jefferson Memorial**
- Books about Abraham Lincoln and the Civil War at the **Lincoln Memorial**
- Books about Franklin D. Roosevelt, the Depression, and World War II at the **Roosevelt Memorial**
- More books on World War II, with an emphasis on the Holocaust, at the **U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum** ✯
- Spy books and gadgets at the **International Spy Museum**
- American art-related gifts at the **Corcoran Gallery**
- Gifts relating to women in the arts at the **National Museum of Women in the Arts**
- More Native American crafts at the **U.S. Department of the Interior's Indian Craft Shop**
- Music, theater, and dance items at the **Kennedy Center**
- Fine arts gifts with a French and Russian theme at **Hillwood Museum**

INDIVIDUAL STORES YOU WILL WANT TO VISIT

Beyond the museum emporiums and shopping areas, the following stores offer consistent value and are worth a special visit.

ANTIQUES

The most intriguing of Georgetown's numerous antique shops is **Carling Nichols Chinese Antiques** (Georgetown, 1675 Wisconsin Ave. NW; ☎ 202/338-5600; www.carlingnichols.com; Tues–Sat noon–5pm; Metrobus: [30], [32], [34], [35], [36]; AE, MC, V). The three owners have filled their elegant, museum-like boutique with 18th and 19th century antiques from Beijing, Shanghai, and Hong Kong. Objects include lacquered cabinets and Han Dynasty painted pottery; expensive, of course.

BOOKSTORES

In Chapter 10, I note Washington's vibrant theater scene. Serving the theatrical community is **Backstage Inc.** ✯ (Capitol Hill, 545 8th St. SE; ☎ 202/544-5744; Mon–Sat 11am–7pm; Metro: Eastern Market; AE, MC, V), a performing arts store. Cramped and untidy, as any backstage, it offers theater books and scripts, as well as makeup, posters, costumes (for sale and rent), dance wear and shoes, wigs, and more.

Searching for a detailed guide to your next destination? Head for Washington's only travel book store, **Candida's World of Books** (U Street Corridor, 1541 14th St. NW; ☎ 202/667-4811; www.candidasworldofbooks.com; Tues–Sat 10am–10pm, Sun noon–8pm; Metro: U Street/African-American Civil War Memorial; MC, V). Though the shop is small, it stocks most of the name guidebook series as well as a growing number of guides you won't find in the big chain stores.

For the striving economist, the bookstore with many of the answers is the **Info Shop/The World Bank** ★★ (Downtown, 18th and Pennsylvania Avenue NW; ☎ 202/458-4500; www.worldbank.org/infoshop; Mon–Fri 9am–5pm; Metro: Farragut West; AE, MC, V). Entire shelves are dedicated to such topics as "social and cultural issues," "poverty," "development economics," "environment and pollution prevention," "labor," "infrastructure," and "governance." More shelves focus on individual countries, such as Mexico. They also stock guidebooks, world music CDs, and World Bank T-shirts, though don't wear this latter when the anti-bank demonstrators are in town.

Another book shop for the technologically inclined is **Reiter's Scientific & Professional Books** ★ (Downtown, 2021 K St. NW; ☎ 202/223-3327; www.reiters.com; Mon–Fri 9am–8pm, Sat 10am–6pm, Sun noon–5pm; Metro: Farragut West; AE, MC, V). In this warehouse-sized store, the shelf topics read "business," "radar and antennas," "biology," "marine engineering," "oceanography," and "medicine."

Basically a gay and lesbian bookstore, **Lambda Rising** ★ (Dupont Circle, 1625 Connecticut Ave. NW; ☎ 202/462-6969; www.lambdarising.com; Sun–Thurs 10am–10pm, Fri–Sat 10am–midnight; Metro: Dupont Circle; AE, MC, V) also offers DVDs, greeting cards, magazines, posters, and humorous gift items. The shelves are packed with quality fiction and learned nonfiction relating to gays and lesbians. But think twice about taking youngsters into this shop; many items displayed, including photo books and magazines, are sexually explicit.

Both **Barnes & Noble** ★★ kids (www.bn.com) and **Borders** ★★ kids (www.bordersbooks.com) have multiple outlets through the city and serve not only as convenient places to purchase a wide variety of books but as lecture halls, when authors known and unknown come by for book readings and signings several times a month. There are simply too many outlets to list here, but if you go to one of the above sites, you'll find the location of the store nearest you.

SECOND-HAND BOOKSTORES

An old-timer on Capitol Hill, **Capitol Hill Books** ★ (Capitol Hill, 657 C St. SE; ☎ 202/544-1621; www.capitolhillbooks-dc.com; Mon–Fri 11:30am–6pm, Sat–Sun 9am–6pm; Metro: Eastern Market; MC, V), occupies a three-story town house so stuffed with volumes (hardback and paperback) you wonder if you can manage to squeeze inside. A certain whimsy is apparent. Cookbooks, appropriately, are stacked in what used to be the kitchen; books about the government crowd the bathroom—as in, our leaders are flushing us down the toilet. Upstairs, visitors will find fiction while the main level is devoted to nonfiction. Most standard paperbacks sell for $3.50 or less; a quality paperback goes for $6.50.

Find the best-sellers and the fiction you're looking for in the well-stocked **Idle Time Books** (Adams Morgan, 2467 18th St. NW; ☎ 202/232-4774; daily 11am–11pm; Metro: Woodley Park/Zoo; AE, MC, V). An Adams Morgan institution, it's been around for more than a quarter century. All books cost at least half the new price.

A Dupont Circle hot spot, **Second Story Books** ★ (Dupont Circle, 2000 P St. NW; ☎ 202/659-8884; www.secondstorybooks.com; daily 10am–10pm; Metro: Dupont Circle; MC, V) claims to be one of the largest used and rare bookstores in the country. In 1973, owner Allan Stypeck started out with 5,000 books

Washington's Best Buys

Washington is an expensive city in which to shop. But you can find bargains. The best buys:

- Substantially marked down fashion apparel and luxury household goods sold in consignment and other second-hand shops. In a city with an active calendar of charity balls and other high-society functions, the fashionable rotate items in and out of their closets quickly.
- Inexpensive ethnic goods—carpets, household accessories, art works from Asia, Africa, and Latin America. The shop owners often are immigrants marketing items from their native land.
- Used books. Washingtonians are serious readers, tracking best sellers in fiction and nonfiction. The city's used bookstores, selling goods at half off the original price, or less, keep well stocked on the latest literary hits.

on the second floor of the building. He currently stocks more than 1 million titles in three Washington area outlets. Stypeck, who has appeared on the PBS program "Antiques Roadshow" appraising rare books, is also co-host of a syndicated radio program called "The Book Guys." The shop's emphasis is on hardback nonfiction in good condition. It tends not to carry best-sellers, favoring less-common titles that are current.

CHILDREN'S APPAREL AND TOYS

The **Fairy Godmother** ★★ (Capitol Hill; 319 7th St. SE; ☎ 202/547-5474; Mon–Fri 10am–6pm, Sat 10am–5pm; Metro: Eastern Market; MC, V) is a quirky little shop selling toys, books, and music for kids. Items are stocked based on their educational value and whether they inspire youngsters to be creative. They require kids to think, to innovate. You will find books, of course, and puppets, art supplies, and foreign language books. Age range: From infants up to about age 16 for books.

Buy clothing for children who never, ever get dirty at **Piccolo Piggies** (Georgetown; 1533 Wisconsin Ave. NW; ☎ 202/333-0123; www.piccolo-piggies.com; Mon–Sat 10am–6pm, Sun 11am–5pm; Metrobus: [30], [32], [34], [35], [36]; AE, MC, V). This is a shop for well-heeled moms and dads who are raising a prince or princess. Take a look out of curiosity or for apparel for a special occasion. For less expensive kid's togs, see the section below on discount clothing stores.

Organic children's clothing for newborns to 8 years is the raison d'etre of **Yiro** ★ (Georgetown; 3236 P St. NW; ☎ 202/338-9476; www.yirostores.com; Mon–Fri 10am–7pm; Sat 10am–6pm, Sun 11am–5pm; Metrobus: [30], [32], [34], [35], [36]; AE, MC, V). "Organic," according to the manufacturer, means the clothing is made and dyed without the use of harmful chemicals. Yiro is a reasonably priced European chain.

CLOTHING FOR MEN, WOMEN, AND (SOMETIMES) CHILDREN

I start this section with the lower cost national chains, and move up (in price) from there.

Discount Stores

Squeezed into every inch of display space, the crowded array of men's, women's, and children's clothing at **T.J. Maxx** ★★ (Friendship Heights, 4350 Jenifer St. cq. NW; ☎ 202/237-7616; www.tjmaxx.com; Mon–Sat 9:30am–9pm, Sun 11am–6pm; Metro: Friendship Heights; AE, MC, V) put your bargain-hunting skills to test. You're sure to find good deals. But if you want something specific, you will have to work to find it. This chain of 800 U.S. outlets buys designer overstocks—too many jeans, for example—at steep discounts and passes the savings on to its customers. It claims to have new fashions arriving weekly.

Just across the street, another national discount clothing chain, **Filene's Basement** ★ (Friendship Heights; 5300 Wisconsin Ave. NW; ☎ 202/966-0208; www.filenesbasement.com; Mon–Sat 9:30am–9pm, Sun noon–6pm; Metro: Friendship Heights; AE, MC, V) offers more bargain-hunting challenges. There's definitely a downscale look to this outlet of the Boston-based chain, which also carries brand-name men's and women's clothing. Utility pipes stretch overhead, and clothing racks are so tightly packed it's a struggle to extract hanging items. But you should find deals. The store tends to be well stocked in men's shirts. I spotted a $75 Ralph Lauren Polo dress shirt for a respectable $45. You might even be lucky enough to show up just after a truck has unloaded racks of sharply discounted Dolce & Gabbana jackets for women. Filene's Basement also has two downtown outlets (529 14th St. NW at F Street; ☎ 202/638-4110; www.filenesbasement.com; Mon–Sat 9:30am–8pm, Sun noon–5pm; Metro: Metro Center; AE, MC, V) and (1133 Connecticut Ave. NW at L Street; ☎ 202/872-8430; www.filenesbasement.com; Mon–Sat 9:30am–8pm, Sun noon–5pm; Metro: Farragut North; AE, MC, V). Their drawback is that you don't have the same comparison shopping options close by that you do at the Friendship Heights location. On the other hand, some dedicated shoppers think the Connecticut Avenue store gets the best stuff. In both downtown shops, as at Friendship Heights, the clothing racks crowd the aisles. But determined hunters will find bargains.

On the opposite side of the street from the Friendship Heights Filene's, compare off-price bargains in women's and men's clothing at **Loehmann's** ★ (Friendship Heights, 5333 Wisconsin Ave. NW; ☎ 202/362-4733; www.loehmanns.com; Mon–Sat 10am–9:30pm, Sun 11am–7pm; Metro: Friendship Heights). I found a rack of Ralph Lauren long-sleeved Polo pullovers, normally priced at about $70, going for under $45 each in a range of sizes and colors. The men's offerings are limited; the store really seems to focus on hip designs for women at a discount. Loehmann's is noted for its Back Room, where designer fashions for women are advertised at 30% to 60% off department store prices. But like the other discounters, you have to hunt in crowded aisles. Fashions by Theory and Diane von Furstenberg are the best buys here. Women in the know also shop here for coats.

Check out more discount apparel for the whole family next door at **Stein Mart** (Friendship Heights, 5345 Wisconsin Ave. NW; ☎ 202/363-7075; www.steinmart.com; Mon–Sat 10am–9pm, Sun noon–6pm; Metro: Friendship Heights). A century-old chain, it promises prices 20% to 60% less than department stores and specialty boutiques. Its merchandise is a curious mix of table lamps and sweaters, picture frames and blouses.

Funky (and moderately priced) Italian apparel—especially jeans and T-shirts for men, women, and kids—fill the crowded racks at **Lifestyles U.S.A.** ✯ (Penn Quarter, 410 7th St. NW; ☎ 202/637-2070; daily 10am–9pm; Metro: Archives/Navy Memorial; AE, MC, V). The place looks like a discount house, but management seems unwilling to admit it. I spotted a fine men's wool suit by Ralph Lauren selling for $299; the original sales tag, crossed out, read "$900."

The Boutiques and Trendier Chains

A decade ago, women's fashions in Washington were regarded as quite conservative and high society ladies traveled out of town for glamorous attire. But nowadays trendy boutiques are opening all over the area. Unfortunately, these trendy fashions are pricy.

A European chain that got its start in Amsterdam, **MEXX** ✯ (Georgetown, 3229 M St. NW; ☎ 202/339-9470; www.mexx.com; Mon–Sat 10am–9pm, Sun 11am–6pm; Metrobus: [30], [32], [34], [35], [36]; AE, MC, V) features reasonable prices and casual, earth-toned apparel for men and women. The shop caters particularly to skinny people who, a clerk informed me, "can't find the right sizes in U.S. stores."

Similar in sizing—it's best for the slim—Spanish chain **Zara** ✯ (Georgetown, 1238 Wisconsin Ave. NW; ☎ 202/944-9797; www.zara.com; Mon–Sat 10am–9pm, Sun noon–6pm; Metrobus: [30], [32], [34], [35], [36]; AE, MC, V) stocks a range of colorful, casual clothes for the young and fashion-conscious, as well as dressier ensembles for both men and women.

Another European chain—they're taking over!—**H&M** (Downtown, 11th and F sts. NW; ☎ 202/347/3306; www.hm.com; Mon–Sat 10am–8pm, Sun noon–6pm; Metro: Metro Center; AE, MC, V) is the king of knock-off fashions for men and women. This extremely affordable line stocks everything from evening wear to T-shirts and collaborates annually with high-end designers.

Find both punk and preppy men's and women's fashions from England at **The District Line** ✯✯✯ (2118 18th St. NW; ☎ 866/575-2532; www.thedistrictline.com; Mon–Sat noon–8pm; Sun noon–5pm; Metro: Dupont Circle; AE, MC, V). The shop is small and doesn't look like much inside or out, but you will find British designer lines—made popular by London's subculture—at reasonable prices. Great for folks tired of looking like everybody else.

Classic, well-priced duds for the office for men and women (white shirts and blouses, trim khakis) is the draw at **Club Monaco** ✯✯ (Georgetown, 3235 M St. NW; ☎ 202/965-2118; www.clubmonaco.com; Mon–Sat 9am–10pm, Sun noon–6pm; Meterobus: [30], [32], [34], [35], [36]; AE, MC, V). Not a discounter, the chain markets its label at reasonable prices. Its sale items rate high with savvy shoppers in this office-oriented city.

Jeans are the draw at **Up Against the Wall** ✯✯ (Georgetown; 3219 M St. NW; ☎ 202/337-9316; www.upagainstthewall.com; Mon–Thurs 10am–9pm; Fri–Sat 10am–10pm, Sun 11am–7pm; Metrobus: [30], [32], [34], [35], [36]; AE, MC, V). The place is packed with "premium denim," a trio of helpful clerks informed me—priced at $20 to $200 a pair. Lots of decorative trim sets these jeans apart.

The under-21 crowd will appreciate the funky/grunge look of **Commander Salamander** (Georgetown, 1420 Wisconsin Ave. NW; ☎ 202/337-2265; Mon–Thurs 10am–9pm, Fri–Sat 10am–10pm, Sun 11am–7pm; Metrobus: [30], [32], [34], [35], [36]; AE, MC, V). Want to look totally disheveled? Outfit yourself here.

Need dressy casual for the weekend? Presumably some of the younger crowd does. Step inside **Urban Outfitters** ✯ (Penn Quarter, 737 7th St. NW; ☎ 202/737-0259; www.urbanoutfitters.com; Mon–Sat 9am–10pm, Sun 11am–7pm; Metro: Archives/Navy Memorial; AE, MC, V). The chain displays affordable copies of hip, high-fashion casual wear for the under-30 crowd headed out for a Saturday night on the town.

Up-and-coming local designers are well represented at **Alex Boutique** (Foggy Bottom, 1919 Pennsylvania Ave. NW; ☎ 202/296-2610; www.alexboutiquedc.com; Mon–Fri 11am–8pm, Sat–Sun noon–6pm; Metro: Foggy Bottom; AE, MC, V). The upscale shop features unique fashions for men and women seeking something different for casual wear, evening chic, business attire, and that special event where you want to make a splash on the social scene.

For reasonably priced cocktail dresses—something nobody else at home will be wearing, check out **Pink November** (U Street Corridor, 1231 U St. NW; ☎ 202/232-3113; Tues–Sat noon–8pm; Sun noon–6pm; Metro: U Street/African-American Civil War Memorial; AE, MC, V). This is a shop for slender women, I'm told. Look also for jersey dresses, bulky sweaters, and large belts. Small and somewhat disorderly in appearance, the shop nevertheless has a strong local following.

Comfortable Attire for Women

My wife's favorite clothing shop is **Pua Naturally** ✯✯✯ (Penn Quarter, 701 Pennsylvania Ave. NW; ☎ 202/347-4543; www.pua-naturally.com; Mon noon–6pm, Tues–Wed noon–7:30pm, Thurs–Fri noon–8pm, Sat 1–7pm, Sun 1–7:30pm; Metro: Archive/Navy Memorial; AE, MC, V). Look for moderately pricey (a splurge?) women's textiles and designs from India, Nepal, and Afghanistan. Exotic in look, and comfortably loose fitting, every item is made from natural fabrics.

Something a little different is the marketing ideology that motivates **Art & Soul** ✯✯✯ (Capitol Hill, 225 Pennsylvania Ave. SE; ☎ 202/548-0105; Mon–Wed and Fri–Sat 11am–6pm, Thurs 11am–7pm; Metro: Capitol South; AE, MC, V). Contemporary wearable art and jewelry for women and a few crafts are the boutique's mainstay. It sells only limited production work that is customarily found in crafts galleries, buying from individual designers from all over the country. Again, the clothing is generally loose fitting, appealing to those over 40, but also unique and a little funky. Not too expensive.

Consignment/Vintage Clothing Shops

Aimed at bargain hunters, **Annie Creamcheese Vintage Boutique** ✯✯ (Georgetown, 3279 M St. NW; ☎ 202/298-5555; www.anniecreamcheese.com; Mon–Wed 11am–8pm, Thurs–Sat 11am–9pm, Sun noon–6pm; Metrobus: [30],

[32], [34], [35], [36]; AE, MC, V) buys second-hand fashions for women (Gucci, Pucci, Dior) made from the 1940s to the 1980s, and sells them at sharply discounted rates. The really good stuff in the high-end department begins at about $100 and climbs into the thousands for a fur coat. The "mod" department—clothing from the '60s—offers items from $5 to $75. Given its Georgetown location, the store gets first-rate items, many barely worn. You may also want to browse Christ Child Opportunity Shop (p. 238), a consignment shop that specializes in homewares instead of clothing.

> *"There are places where knowing a lot about fashion does make you feel cool. This is not one of them. Because, with some exceptions, people in Washington (cue collective intake of breath!) just don't care that much."*
>
> —Suzanne D'Amato, Deputy Editor of the *Washington Post*'s Sunday Source section, Sept. 3, 2006

For contemporary bargains in women's fashions, don't miss the second-floor showroom of **Secondi** (Dupont Circle, 1702 Connecticut Ave. NW; ☎ 202/667-1122; www.secondi.com; Mon–Tues and Sat 11am–6pm, Wed–Fri 11am–7pm, Sun 1–5pm; Metro: Dupont Circle; AE, MC, V). A consignment house, it receives "good as new" second-hand designer clothing. To be sold, items—often from the closets of society ladies—must be no more than 2 years old and in fashion.

Another excellent source for upscale women's wear at bargain-basement prices is the **Second Affair Consignment Shop** (Adams Morgan, 1904 18th St. NW; ☎ 202/265-1829; Tues–Fri 11:30am–6pm, Sat 10am–5pm; Metro: Dupont Circle; AE, MC, V). Lots of used (but still usable) designer clothing fill the racks of this small shop. You will have to hunt to find something you like in your size. But management notes that items that may have originally carried $3,000 price tags go for as little as $300. But you will find plenty under $100 too.

ETHNIC CRAFTS AND CLOTHING

African/Middle Eastern

For Middle Eastern crafts and books on Middle Eastern affairs, take a look at **American Educational Trust/Palestinian Arts and Crafts Trust** (Adams Morgan, 1902 18th St. NW; ☎ 202/939-6050; www.amedtrust.org; Mon–Fri 9am–5:30pm; Metro: Dupont Circle; MC, V). The organization, which publishes a magazine called *The Washington Report on Middle East Affairs,* says its function is to "promote the cause of peace in Palestine." It also supports the work of Palestinian artisans in the West Bank, Gaza, and elsewhere in the Middle East. Along with issue-oriented literature, it sells hand-embroidered cloth from Palestinian refugee camps and colorful pottery from Jerusalem.

Enter Egypt by way of **Khan El-Khalili** (Capitol Hill, 321 7th St. SE; ☎ 202/543-5295; daily 10am–6pm; Metro: Eastern Market; AE, MC, V), a merchant of Egyptian and Islamic gifts, clothes, and oils. Dozens of small bottles of scented oil line the shelves, to be used as perfume or burned as a form of incense. Ornate perfume bottles, boxes with hand-inlaid mother of pearl, belly dancing scarves, silver jewelry, and *shisha* pipes are among the shop's other exotic goods. As in Egypt, the

merchandise cascades down the front steps, catching the eye and tempting you inside.

West African attire, jewelry, and accessories for men and women are the focus of **Kobos Afrikan Clothiers** ✯ (Adams Morgan, 2444 18th St. NW; ☎ 202/332-9580; www.kobosclothiers.com; Mon–Sat 11am–8pm; Metro: Woodley Park/Zoo; AE, MC, V). Beautifully colored and patterned, the mostly West African items are made in Ghana for everyday wear. Customers come from the local African community and from Africans living elsewhere in the United States. Peace Corps volunteers and State Department diplomats are known to drop in before flying off to their assigned post.

Lovely Ethiopian homeland attire and fabrics are the focus at **Yerus** (2204 18th St. NW; ☎ 202/483-7017; Mon–Sat 11am–8pm; Metro: Woodley Park/Zoo; AE, MC, V). The elegant little shop markets modern and traditional Ethiopian wear for men and women to the local Ethiopian community. Made in Ethiopia, the clothing is worn at church, weddings, and other important occasions.

For more adventures in Africa, visit **Bazaar Atlas** ✯ (Adams Morgan, 2405 18th St. NW; ☎ 202/332-4911; Sun–Thurs 11:30am–9pm, Fri–Sat 11:30am–11pm; Metro: Woodley-Park/Zoo; AE, MC, V). This narrow, two-story mart is crammed floor to ceiling with African masks and other African art, Moroccan ceramics and beads, carvings from India, jewelry, drums, dolls, baskets, old African travel posters, and colorful hand-woven fabrics. A tall bag placed on the floor holds frankincense, the legendary incense of The Three Wise Men, which is sold by the scoop.

Asian

Inspect one of the East Coast's largest collections of Buddha statuary at **Designer Art & Craft USA** ✯ (Dupont Circle, 1709 Connecticut Ave. NW; ☎ 202/462-5489; daily 9:30am–9:30pm; Metro: Dupont Circle; AE, MC, V). The shop looks small only from the outside; inside the showroom spills over into an adjacent building. The focus is on handicrafts—rugs, jewelry, furniture, chess sets, shawls—from 20 countries in Central and South Asia. Rugs are sorted by size, which is a convenience to customers. And the prices are quite reasonable.

For martial arts weapons, clothing and other items go to Chinatown's **Kung Fu Gift Shop** (Penn Quarter/Chinatown, 815 7th St. NW; ☎ 202/737-1919; 9:30am–8:30pm daily; Metro: Archives/Navy Memorial; MC, V). The hole-in-the-wall shop is redolent of China. So is its neighbor, **Da Hsin Trading Co.** (Penn Quarter/Chinatown, 811 7th St. NW; ☎ 202/789-4020; www.dahsin.com; Mon–Sat 9:30am–7:30pm, Sun 10am–7:30pm; Metro: Archives/Navy Memorial; MC, V). Two rooms are crammed full of Chinese pottery, jewelry, fans, furniture, foods, herbs, and other items. You will think you are in Asia.

All things Japanese fill the shelves of **Ginza** (Dupont Circle, 1721 Connecticut Ave. NW; ☎ 202/331-7991; Mon–Sat 11am–7pm, Sun noon–6pm; Metro: Dupont Circle; AE, MC, V). Look for teapots and cups, lacquer ware, ceramics, jewelry, and a large selection of men's and women's kimonos. I've worn Japanese cotton kimonos for years, finding the wrap-around style comfortable. I also appreciate their drape-to-the-floor length when I step outside on a winter morning to pick up the newspaper.

The exotic art of the Himalayan Mountains is displayed at **Himalayan House** (Dupont Circle, 1319 Connecticut Ave. NW; ☎ 202/223-3366; www.himalayanhouse.com; Mon–Sat 10am–8pm, Sun noon–6pm; Metro: Dupont Circle; MC, V), a small but well-stocked shop that markets the handmade arts and crafts of Nepal, Tibet, and elsewhere in the Himalayan region. The jewelry items—a silver dragonfly with colored stones, for example—are unusual, attractive, and inexpensive.

Latin American

South of the border is the focus of **100% Mexico-Hecho a Mano** ✯ (U Street Corridor, 1612 14th St. NW; ☎ 202/332-2888; www.100mexico.net; Tues–Fri noon–7pm; Sat 11–7pm, Sun noon–6pm; Metro: U Street/African-American Civil War Memorial; AE, MC, V), a large and exceedingly colorful shop that sells quality Mexican folk art. Look for Talavera pottery, fantastical Oaxacan carved wood creatures, beadwork, and sculptures in tin. The pottery Nativity scenes make a nice Christmas gift.

The museum-quality work of Peru's master artisans is displayed in the upscale gallery **Toro Mata** ✯✯ (Adams Morgan, 2410 18th St. NW; ☎ 202/232-3890; www.toromata.com; Tues–Fri noon–10pm, Sat 9am–10pm, Sun noon–6pm; Metro: Woodley Park/Zoo; AE, MC, V). Browse folk art, furniture, decorating accessories and pottery.

From Several Different Regions

A shop with a conscience (No child labor. Safe and healthy working conditions): Purchase international crafts and at the same time aid the artisans of a developing country at **Pangea Artisan Market & Café at the International Finance Corporation** ✯✯✯ (Downtown, 2121 Pennsylvania Ave. NW; ☎ 202/8PANGEA; www.pangeamarket.com; Mon–Fri 7am–7pm, Sat 9am–5pm; Metro: Farragut West or Foggy Bottom; AE, MC, V). Opened in May 2006, the large, museumlike store sells items from 30 countries, providing the artisans a fair-priced market they couldn't develop on their own. This is the place to find unusual quality items at affordable prices: Metal figurines in native costume from Burkina Faso cost $15. Pottery tree ornaments from Bolivia are $13. Silk scarves from India start at $30. Stuffed children's fantasy animals from Kenya are $40.

You can't miss **Silk Road Tribal & Village Arts** ✯✯ (Capitol Hill, 311–315 7th St. SE; ☎ 202/543-1705; www.wovenhistory.com; daily 10am–6pm; Metro: Eastern Market; MC, V). Oriental rugs, pottery, and other Asian goods spill out the front door and down to the street—as they might in the old country. For proprietor Mehmet Yalcin, that was Turkey. He claims to buy in places "nobody knows exist"—from Tibet, Afghan tribes, and from a dozen Asian countries—which allows him to beat his competitors in price.

For its sheer abundance of exotic Asian and African goods, no place is as much fun to explore as **Village Art & Craft** ✯✯ (Georgetown, 1353 Wisconsin Ave. NW; ☎ 202/333-1968; Mon–Sat 10am–7pm; Metrobus: [30], [32], [34], [35], [36]; AE, MC, V). Tapestries, drums, fabrics, clothing, jewelry, Pashmina shawls, porcelains, and other goods from more than 32 countries are crammed into the slender store. Look here for belly dance supplies (something you might not find at home). This is the place to find lots of home decorating objects at bargain prices.

Food

Curiosities await at **Cost Plus World Market** (Friendship Heights, 5335 Wisconsin Ave. NW; ☎ 202/244-8720; www.worldmarket.com; Mon–Sat 9am–9pm, Sun 10am–7pm; Metro: Friendship Heights). Find food products from around the world (Italian gnocchi, Australian ginger beer) side-by-side with toys, rugs, glassware, and dining room furniture produced around the world. It's a good place to find offbeat, inexpensive gifts for friends and family back home.

Love barbecue? Then the shop for you is **Uncle Brutha's Hot Sauce Emporium** ★ (Capitol Hill, 323 7th St. SE; ☎ 202/546-FIRE; www.unclebrutha.com; Tues–Thurs 10am–7pm; Fri 10am–8pm, Sat 9am–7pm; Metro: Eastern Market; AE, MC, V). Uncle Brutha's award-winning recipe was born in Washington—yea team, a local product—but it's produced in Pennsylvania. Try a sample at the Tasting Bar. A five-ounce bottle, green (medium) or red (hot), sells for $5. The shop also displays more than 300 different hot sauces, spices, specialty condiments, barbecue sauces, salsas, marinades, dry rubs, and jerk seasonings.

Small and crowded, **Khartoum Grocery** (Adams Morgan, 2116 18th St. NW; ☎ 202/265-7100; Mon–Sat 10am–9pm, Sun 10am–7pm; Metro: Dupont Circle; MC, V) markets Middle Eastern and African goods. You probably won't want or need any of this stuff, but it's fun to look at the Egyptian candies, bags of rice from Pakistan, Turkish cheese, Shanghai tea, packages of dried figs from Turkey, and boxes of Egyptian corn flour. Incense adds atmosphere to the shop.

More scents of Africa greet you as you enter an exotic Ethiopian mart called **Addisu Gebeya** (Adams Morgan, 2202 18th St. NW; ☎ 202/986-6013; daily 9am–9pm; MC, V). Definitely a home-spun kind of place, it displays barrels of ground wheat and barley (buy by the scoop); honey from Egypt; tapes, CDs, and books from Ethiopia; and cellophane bags filled with what look to be small twigs; the label says "gesho." I had to ask. "Hops for homemade beer," the proprietor informed me.

GALLERIES

Moderately priced paintings and prints, many of them by emerging Washington artists, are displayed at **Attitude Exact Gallery** (Capitol Hill, 739 8th St. SE; ☎ 202/546-7186; Tues–Sat 11am–7pm; Metro: Eastern Market; AE, MC, V). Many of the works are Africa- and African-American themed.

Wouldn't we all like to take travel photos like this? When you visit his tiny shop, **Claude Taylor Photography Gallery** (Dupont Circle, 1627 Connecticut Ave. NW; ☎ 202/518-4000; www.travelphotography.net; daily 9am–9pm; Metro: Dupont Circle; AE, MC, V), you're likely to find Taylor himself selling colored prints of his travel photos. He has visited 20 countries and most major U.S. cities, all represented in his stock. Framed photos ($40–$120) hang on the wall; matted photos ($20–$60) fill easy to search baskets.

Climb a long flight of stairs to the city's largest cooperative art gallery, **Touchstone Gallery** (Penn Quarter, 406 7th St. NW; ☎ 202/347-2787; www.touchstonegallery.com; Wed–Fri 11am–5pm, Sat–Sun noon–5pm; Metro: Archives/Navy Memorial; AE, MC, V). More than 30 artists are represented, displaying paintings, sculptures, textiles, and pottery. Prices soar into the thousands, but here and there you might find something affordable. On my last visit, I fell for an exquisitely shaped stoneware vase entitled "Rain Bottle," which cost $170.

A Dupont Circle Gallery Walk

Art fanciers can get a glimpse of Washington's lively art scene on a short walk near Dupont Circle. Begin at Connecticut Avenue and R Street NW. This delightful, tree-shaded residential street is home to a cluster of galleries, all operating out of architecturally interesting townhouses. Maybe the loveliest interior—lots of dark wood in the Victorian style—is the showcase for contemporary art and works by living artists at **Marsha Mateyka Gallery** (2012 R. St. NW; ☎ 202/328-0088; www.marshamateykagallery.com; Wed–Sat 11am–5pm; AE, MC, V). One of her artists is Sam Gilliam, a leader in the Washington Color Field school of art; her only exception to living artists is Gene Davis, another member of the Washington Color Field. For a brief description of the Color Field, see the Hirshhorn Museum, Chapter 5, p. 118. On the next block, climb the steps to **Alex Gallery** (2106 R St. NW; ☎ 202/667-2599; www.alexgalleries.com; Tues–Sat 11am–5pm; AE, MC, V), which shows modern American and European painting, sculpture and works on paper. Step down to **Gallery A,** a separate arm of Alex Gallery, which features emerging (read less expensive) artists.

See the work of Washington-area artists (usually) at **Studio Gallery** (2108 R St. NW; ☎ 202/232-8734; www.studiogallerydc.com; Wed–Sat 11am–5pm, Sun 1–5pm; AE, MC, V). Artist-owned, the gallery features the work of 37 local, professional artists in solo and group exhibits. Don't miss the outdoor sculpture garden. As much a museum as gallery, the **Fonda del Sol Visual Arts Center** (2112 R St. NW; ☎ 202/265-9235; Tues–Sat 12:30–5:30pm; no credit cards) promotes the cultural heritage and arts of the Americas in part by displaying and selling the work of contemporary artists and crafts makers. Canadian Eskimo (Inuit) sculpture and works on paper fill **Burdick Gallery** (2114 R St. NW; ☎ 202/986-5682; www.burdickgallery.com; Tues–Sat 11am–5pm; AE, MC, V). Double back to 21st Street; turn right one block to Hillyer Place. Turn left on Hillyer to **Jane Haslem Gallery** (2025 Hillyer Place NW; ☎ 202/232-4644; www.janehaslemgallery.com; Wed–Sat noon–5pm; AE, MC, V). Haslem specializes in American art—paintings, prints, drawings—from the second half of the 20th century.

GIFTS

My favorite Georgetown store, featuring high quality handmade crafts from leading American artisans, is **Appalachian Spring** (Georgetown, 1415 Wisconsin Ave. NW; ☎ 202/337-5780; 10am–8pm Mon–Fri, 10am–6pm Sat, noon–6pm Sun; Metrobus: [30], [32], [34], [35], [36]; AE, MC, V). The crafts—wood, glass, metal, fabric, pottery—are beautifully displayed; the show room resembles a classy museum. Despite the name, the crafts come from all over the country. Prices are high, but looking is free.

The Lone Department Store

Downtown Washington has one all-purpose department store, **Macy's** (12th and G sts. NW; ☎ 202/628-6661; www.macys.com; Mon–Sat 10am–8pm, Sun noon–6pm; Metro: Metro Center; AE, MC, V). Household and kitchen items on the lower floor; women's, men's, and children's wear—featuring middle-of-the-road designer labels—on four more floors. Those of us who have lived awhile in Washington remember when the Macy's neighborhood sported a half dozen department stores. We wander Macys' aisles wishing for the good old days. It's an attractive store, a branch of the famous New York legend. Check the ads in the *Washington Post* for frequent sales.

Washington's favorite novelty store for its goofy gadgets and whimsical gifts is the **Chocolate Moose** (Downtown, 1743 L St. NW; ☎ 202/463-0992; www.chocolatemoosedc.com; Mon–Sat 10am–6pm; Metro: Farragut North; AE, MC, V). Buy comical greeting cards, miniature windup toys; holiday-related items (masks at Halloween; chocolate turkeys at Thanksgiving; hula Santas at Christmas). I fill my wife's Christmas stocking with this kind of nonsense stuff. There's nothing expensive in this shop except the Leonidas chocolates from Belgium.

Step downstairs from the street to the shop for the **Human Rights Campaign** (Dupont Circle, 1629 Connecticut Ave. NW; ☎ 202/232-8621; www.hrc.org; Mon–Sat 11am–9pm, Sun 11am–7pm; Metro: Dupont Circle; AE, MC, V). The organization, which works for equal rights for lesbians, gays, bisexuals, and transgender individuals, operates this store. It sells T-shirts, sweatshirts, coffee mugs, and lots of other stuff carrying its equality logo—a gold equal sign against a blue background. A big seller is the Dupont Circle T-shirt. Proceeds help fund the organization's work.

Let's get, well, nostalgic at the **Music Box Center** ★ (Downtown, 1920 I St. NW; ☎ 202/783-9399; Mon–Fri 10am–5:30pm, Sat 10am–3pm; Metro: Farragut West; MC, V). This is a delightful store, if somewhat old-fashioned, filled with about 1,500 music boxes—large and small, expensive and not, new and antique—most of them different. They come from around the world; feature figures of dancers, soldiers, angels, animals; play marches, operas, rock, pop, and more; and range in price from $17 to $6,000. Not to be sexist, moms and young daughters will love this shop. Personally, I like the whirling merry-go-rounds.

A self-proclaimed anti-tourist gift shop—"not the stuff you find where the tour buses pull up"—**Pulp** (U Street Corridor, 1803 14th St. NW; ☎ 202/462-2857; www.pulpdc.com; Mon–Fri 11am–7pm, Sat 10am–7pm, Sun 10am–5pm; Metro: U Street/African-American Civil War Memorial; AE, MC, V), is a little naughty and politically incorrect. It stocks such items as small tins of mints reading, for example, "Every time you masturbate, God kills a kitten,"—and this is one of the less risqué ones. Residents of blue states (or foreign visitors) might go for the $20 black T-shirt proclaiming "Bush's Last Day 01-20-09." That, of course, is when a new

president will be inaugurated. Pulp has a second store on Capitol Hill (303 Pennsylvania Ave. SE; ☎ 202/543-1924; www.pulpdc.com; Mon–Fri 9am–7pm, Sat 10am–7pm, Sun 10am–5pm; Metro: Capitol South; AE, MC, V), which has an especially large stock of unusual greeting cards. No Hallmark cliches in this card and gift shop; it seeks out small card companies with limited distribution. Gay-themed cards are in the back room. Most gift items are under $20.

The name of this shop with two branches more than hints at the merchandise. It's the **Pleasure Place** (Dupont Circle, 1710 Connecticut Ave. NW; ☎ 202/483-3297; Metro: Dupont Circle; and Georgetown; 1063 Wisconsin Ave. NW; ☎ 202/333-8570; www.pleasureplace.com; Mon–Tues 10am–10pm, Wed–Sat 10am–midnight, Sun noon–7pm; Metrobus: [30], [32], [34], [35], [36]; AE, MC, V), an erotic boutique selling sexual toys, apparel, DVDs, books, and games—for straights and gay/lesbians. In business for a quarter-century, the shops are an indication that legislation isn't the only thing Washington thinks about.

FOR FIDO AND FLUFFY

Who is your best friend? Well, remember him or her at **Doggie Style, Boutique & Pet Spa** (Adams Morgan, 1825 18th St. NW; ☎ 202/667-0595; www.doggiestylebakery.com; Mon–Sat 11am–8:30pm, Sun 11am–6pm; Metro: Dupont Circle; MC, V). Pick up homemade, all-natural treats for the pooch you left with neighbors. No bargains here, but then would you really want to go cheap on a gift for your best friend?

Don't these pet stores come up with clever names? **Pawticulars** (Capitol Hill, 407-A 8th St. SE; ☎ 202/546-7387; www.pawticulars.com; Mon–Wed and Fri–Sat 11am–6pm, Thurs 11am–7pm; Metro: Eastern Market; AE, MC, V) is another pet boutique and bakery where you can also pick up a souvenir gift for the little friend you left at home. Brightly decorated cookies and other treats might tempt you to nibble. Despite the appearance—more to appeal to the pet owner than the pets themselves, I suspect—the frosted items are made of healthy, organic ingredients.

HOUSEHOLD GOODS/FURNISHINGS

Examine the handiwork of French and Italian artists at **A Mano** (Georgetown, 1677 Wisconsin Ave. NW; ☎ 202/298-7200; www.amano.bz; Mon–Sat noon–5pm, Sun 10am–6pm; Metro: [30], [32], [34], [35], [36]; AE, MC, V). Its well-stocked showroom and elegant courtyard garden overflow with bright colorful ceramic tableware, textiles, and other decorative accessories. Every summer we fill a hanging pot from A Mano in our patio garden with marigolds, and it's always a tossup whether the pot or the blooms provide the best show.

Check out the cool furniture designs at **Apartment Zero** (Penn Quarter, 406 7th St. NW; ☎ 202/628-4067; www.apartmentzero.com; Wed–Sat 11am–6pm, Sun noon–5pm; Metro: Archives/Navy Memorial; AE, MC, V). Colorful and hip, the shop strives to be the cutting edge of contemporary design. Initially it concentrated on the works of American and Canadian designers. But it has expanded to include Dutch, German, Italian, and Scandinavian furnishings. Penn Quarter has seen a boom in condo apartment construction since the opening of the Verizon Center. It's like stepping into a contemporary art museum.

Cutting-edge contemporary furniture is also the focus at **Skynear & Company** (Adams Morgan, 2122 18th St. NW; ☎ 202/797-7160; www.skynearonline.com;

Mon–Sat 11am–7pm, Sun noon–6pm; Metro: Dupont Circle; AE, VC, V). Lots of Italian and Danish pieces on three floors. Those icons on the stairway are all that remain from the store's debut 2 decades ago selling mostly goods from Egypt and the Middle East. Informed sources (not connected to the store) tell me that although the furniture isn't cheap, it's priced lower than many of its competitors in the city.

Real bargains for lucky shoppers are always a possibility at **Christ Child Opportunity Shop** ✯✯ (Georgetown, 1427 Wisconsin Ave. NW; ☎ 202/333-6635; Mon noon–4pm, Tues–Sat 10am–5pm; Metrobus: [30], [32], [34], [35], [36]; no credit cards). Given its upscale Georgetown location, the consignment shop gets high-quality household items—silver, china, crystal, porcelain, decorative objects—and everything is at least 50% off its original price. Lots of unwanted, unused wedding gifts are left here to be sold, as is the first wife's furnishings when the new wife moves in. Proceeds benefit needy children.

Everything for the table top—colorful and mostly inexpensive—fills to overflowing in an odd but delightful little shop called **Go Mama Go!** (U Street Corridor, 1809 14th St. NW; ☎ 202/299-0850; www.gomamago.com; Mon noon–7pm, Tues–Sat 11am–7pm, Sun noon–5pm; Metro: U Street/African-American Civil War Memorial; MC, V). The interior looks like a flea market, with piles of table top items—attractive Japanese serving dishes, Austrian candles, painted glassware, pottery—all stacked high atop tables or in baskets.

On a street of new condos, there's got to be a kitchen store catering to apartment dwellers, and it's **Home Rule** ✯✯ (U Street Corridor, 1807 14th St. NW; ☎ 202/797-5544; www.homerule.com; Mon–Sat 11am–7pm, Sun noon–5pm; Metro: U Street/African-American Civil War Memorial; AE, MC, V). The name means a lot to long time Washington residents. The U.S. Congress okayed the Home Rule Act of 1973, allowing residents to vote for a Mayor and City Council. Previously, an appointed commission governed. Look here for high-style kitchen appliances and utensils (Italian and other European designs) for chic urban dwellers. Items tend to be of moderate size, just right for small spaces. This is the store for apartment dwellers with limited kitchen storage space.

My favorite cooking wares shop, as much fun to browse as it is to buy, is **Sur La Table** ✯✯✯ (Friendship Heights, 5211 Wisconsin Ave. NW; ☎ 202/237-0375; www.surlatable.com; Mon–Wed and Sat 10am–6pm; Thurs–Fri 10am–8pm, Sun noon–6pm; Metro: Friendship Heights; AE, MC, V). Much larger than Home Rule, it carries all the gadgets you might buy if you have plenty of kitchen cabinet space to store them. If you need something for the kitchen or for your dining room table, you're likely to find it here: pots, pans, glassware, painted Italian bowls, appliances, and table linens. I often stuff my wife's Christmas stocking with handy, inexpensive gadgets, like an olive prong (to remove olives from a jar) or asparagus "tweezers" (to serve cooked stalks of asparagus). The store, part of a national Seattle-based chain, is packed full of the useful and the whimsical—a real treat for browsers. Catch the clearance sales in January and July for the best buys.

JEWELRY

The marquee of what once was the Georgetown Theater, a movie house, now announces the **National Jewelry Center** (Georgetown, 1351 Wisconsin Ave. NW; Tues–Sat 11am–6pm, Sun 12:30–5:30pm; Metrobus: [30], [32], [34], [35], [36]).

Inside, 20 individual vendors operate stalls selling watches, rings, gold and silver chains, and similar adornments. This is Washington's modest equivalent of the diamond districts in Manhattan and downtown Los Angeles. Stall keepers assure me they sell at a discount. If you know jewelry you could find a bargain. Be sure of the quality of any gem before you spend big money.

Part museum, part shop, the **Bead Museum Store** (Penn Quarter, 400 7th St. NW; ☎ 202/624-4500; www.beadmuseumdc.org; Wed–Sat 11am–4pm, Sun 1–4pm; Metro: Archives/Navy Memorial; MC, V). The museum, opened in 1995, explores the history and the cultural aspects of bead-making and design from around the world. Its small shop sells beadwork of all kinds—including Native American and African—as well as publications dealing with beadwork. Pop in for a look.

To create a beaded necklace or bracelet for yourself, visit **Beadazzled** ✯ (Dupont Circle, 1507 Connecticut Ave. NW; ☎ 202/265-2323; www.beadazzled.net; Mon–Sat 10am–8pm, Sun 11am–6pm; Metro: Dupont Circle; AE, MC, V). It displays beads from around the world from 10¢ each for simple colored glass to $38 each for antique Venetian trade beads.

MUSIC STORES: CDS, RECORDS, AND INSTRUMENTS

Pop music fans will want to plunge into the used and new CD and LP stacks at **Crooked Beat Records** ✯✯ (Adams Morgan, 2318 18th St. NW; ☎ 202/483-BEAT; Mon 2–9pm, Tues–Wed noon–9pm, Thurs–Sat noon–10pm; Sun noon–7pm; Metro: Woodley Park/Zoo; MC, V). This well-stocked, step-down hole-in-the-wall specializes in hard-to-find independent label music and obscure major label releases "outside the radar of the mainstream." As a souvenir, take home a CD featuring a Washington group. Ask the knowledgeable staff to help you choose a D.C. winner.

Look for other hard to find CDs at **Melody Record Shop** ✯ (Dupont Circle, 1623 Connecticut Ave. NW; ☎ 202/232-4002; Sun–Thurs 10am–10pm, Fri–Sat 10am–11pm; Metro: Dupont Circle; AE, MC, V). Fans love the wide selection of everything, including a large stock of classical works, and a staff that also knows a lot about contemporary music. If you go for the classical CDs, check out the sales items at the store entrance, and then head for the rear where you find the bulk of the classics.

If you know pop music, you are sure to find more bargains at **CD Warehouse** ✯ (Georgetown, 3001 M St. NW; ☎ 202/625-7101; Mon–Thurs 11am–9pm, Fri–Sat 11am–10pm, Sun noon–8:30pm; Metrobus: [30], [32], [34], [35], [36]; AE, MC, V). Definitely downscale in look, its huge in size, offering what seems to me a much larger choice of pop CDs overall. You will get lost exploring the CD bins and may not emerge for days.

Ignore the ear-shattering beats pulsating from inside and dive into **Ritmo Latino** ✯✯ (Adams Morgan, 1775 Columbia Rd. NW; ☎ 202/299-0411; www.ritmolatino.com; daily 9:15am–10:50pm; Metro: Woodley Park/Zoo; AE, MC, V). A large, color-splashed shop in the heart of the city's Hispanic neighborhood, it stocks the latest pop CDs, videos, and other entertainment from Mexico and Central and South America. English-speaking staff members can help you chose from covers emblazoned with Spanish and Portuguese names. Every time I've ventured inside, the hip-swinging, finger-snapping customers caught up in the music seem to be creating a sort of minifiesta.

Capitol Hill's Historic Market

Capitol Hill's prime shopping attraction, a community institution and village center since 1873, is **Eastern Market** ★★ (Capitol Hill, 7th Street and North Carolina Avenue SE.; www.easternmarket.net; Tues–Sat 7am–6pm, Sun 9am–4pm; Metro: Eastern Market). A slender, block-long brick structure with a high vaulted ceiling, its crowded interior is filled with vendors selling fresh meat, fish, poultry, fruits and vegetables, cheeses, and baked goods. On the outside, a cast-iron open-air shed shelters the Saturday and Sunday **Farmers Market.** In late summer, ripe aromatic local peaches are stacked high, and bouquets of fresh-cut flowers add a festive note. Lots of vendors set out plates of sliced fruit and vegetables so you can sample before buying. On Saturday, there's also a **Crafts Fair** from 10am to 5pm. Dozens of artisans tempt you with handmade (mostly) jewelry, pottery, clothing, prints, furniture, and toys. On Sunday, the crafts folks give way to a **Flea Market** from 10am to 5pm at which practically anything might be for sale, usually at a good price. Look for small furniture pieces, tableware, books, gardening tools, and assorted knickknacks. And just across 7th Street, a competing crafts fair and flea market, operating on the grounds of a public school, add 50 or more vendors to be checked out. Start your Saturday morning off right with breakfast at **The Market Lunch,** Eastern Market's carryout cafe. Two eggs, toast, grits, and sausage on a paper plate, $4.50; a pile of blueberry pancakes, $4.50—served from 7:30–10:55am. On a nice day, the waiting line can extend out the door. If you're in a hurry, grab an apple crunch muffin at **The Fine Sweet Shoppe,** a few steps away.

Students of the guitar, and anyone curious about guitars, must make a pilgrimage up the steep, worn steps to the venerable **Guitar Shop** ★★ (Dupont Circle, 1216 Connecticut Ave. NW; ☎ 202/331-7333; www.theguitarshop.com; Mon–Fri noon–7pm, Sat 11am–6pm; Metro: Dupont Circle; MC, V). More than 80 years old, it may be America's oldest shop designing, selling, repairing, and teaching guitars. In its incredibly cramped and cluttered second-floor space, it maintains a catalog of 2,000 guitars (not all of them within the shop), some dating back to the 1700s. They are priced from $200 to $200,000. Bob Dylan, Paul Simon, the Mamas and the Pappas, and other big name entertainers have stopped here.

POLITICAL MEMORABILIA

Political junkies and students of American history won't want to miss **Political Americana** ★★★ (Downtown, 1331 Pennsylvania Ave. NW; ☎ 202/737-7730; www.politicalamericana.com; Mon–Sat 9am–8pm, Sun 10am–6pm; Metro: Metro Center; AE, MC, V), which overflows with presidential political memorabilia: campaign buttons, posters, bumper stickers, and more. Buttons for recent candidates

(winners and losers) go for as little as five for $10. But the price increases as you delve back in history; a William Jennings Bryan campaign ribbon (he was a 3-time loser in 1896, 1900, and 1908) is $75. You can also buy official presidential items, such as the White House cufflinks and tie clasps that presidents give as a thank you to their aides and supporters (who in turn sell them to the shop) or playing cards with the Air Force One or Air Force Two logo. Cufflinks go for $195 to $1,200, depending on the president. Signed White House Christmas cards are another big seller. The shop claims to have items from most presidencies.

SPORTING GOODS AND APPAREL

Sports-minded shoppers will want to take a look at **Asylum** (Penn Quarter, 819 7th St. NW; ☎ 202/408-3336; www.asylumwakeskatesnow.com; Mon–Sat 10am–9pm, Sun 11am–6pm; Metro: Archives/Navy Memorial; AE, MC, V). It caters to the "wake/skate/snow" crowd as in wakeboard skiing, skateboarding, and snowboarding. Skateboarding is especially popular in Washington, so the shop displays lots of "decks"—that is, the boards minus the wheels. Look for sales on an average of once a month.

Find active sports attire at affordable prices at **City Sports** (Penn Quarter, 727 7th St. NW; ☎ 202/638-3115; www.citysports.com; Mon–Sat 10am–9:30pm, Sun 11am–8pm; Archives/Navy Memorial; AE, MC, V). Items in this well-organized shop are displayed by sport: tennis, hiking, boxing, soccer, running, workout, and so on. As someone who buys this stuff, I find the layout a real convenience.

I buy my running shoes at **New Balance DC** (Friendship Heights, 5301 Wisconsin Ave. NW; ☎ 202/237-1840; www.newbalancedc.com; Mon–Sat 10am–8pm, Sun noon–5pm; Metro: Friendship Heights) because the staff seems to make a special effort to assure I get a proper fit.

STATIONARY

A small shop run by the owners, **Just Paper** ★★ (Georgetown, 3232 P St. NW; ☎ 202/333-9141; www.justpaperandtea.com; Tues–Sat 10am–5pm; Metrobus: [30], [32], [34], [35], [36]; AE, MC, V) sells beautiful, and not so expensive, handmade paper from Italy and Japan. If you want to send a very special note, this is the place to buy paper and envelope. The packaging will so wow the recipient, your words will be superfluous. "Just Paper" is not quite accurate; you also can buy your choice of more than 30 loose teas from India, China, and Japan.

10 Washington After Dark

Whether you're a cultural maven or groovy hipster, you've got plenty of choices in the nightlife department.

ONCE UPON A TIME IN THE NOT-TOO-DISTANT PAST, WASHINGTON TURNED out the lights and called it a day soon after nightfall. But that was yesterday's Washington. Today's city keeps grownup hours. If you choose to stay up partying past midnight into early morning, you'll find plenty of company.

Nightlife options are abundant and varied—and sometimes exotic—reflecting the city's diverse, cosmopolitan population. Most activities are conveniently located downtown or in close-in neighborhoods—Georgetown, Dupont Circle, Adams Morgan, Penn Quarter, U Street, Capitol Hill—where much of Washington lives. These urban dwellers—many of them university students and young professionals—keep the entertainment pot stirring.

Every season, world premieres are unveiled—usually contemporary, often controversial, and occasionally outrageous. Two theaters specialize in Shakespearean works; another focuses on American plays and musicals.

The city's renowned orchestra, opera, and ballet companies add to the cultural choices. And they are complemented by the Washington Performing Arts Society, which presents acclaimed classical soloists, musical groups, and dance companies at various concert halls. Big name pop entertainers appear regularly at the Verizon Center, Warner Theatre, and other stages. Four downtown multiplex theaters feature the latest Hollywood and foreign films. The Smithsonian and other Mall attractions schedule music, film, and additional cultural entertainment.

On the wilder side, you won't lack for places to let off late-hour steam: fancy lounges, after-work bars, dives, cabarets, live or electronic music clubs, jazz clubs, dance clubs, and venues catering to gays and lesbians.

I've grouped your entertainment options as follows:

LIVE THEATER, THE CITY'S TOP ENTERTAINMENT BUY

Outside of New York City, few other U.S. cities provide so many choices night after night—and generally at an affordable price. Like New York, we have our "Broadway" extravaganzas (expensive) and our "Off-Broadway" shows which are as professionally staged, but inexpensive. By "Broadway" I mean the Broadway-bound or post-Broadway touring shows that play the big auditoriums—the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, the National Theatre, and the Warner

Woolly Discounts

Woolly offers three ways to get off-price tickets, other than visiting the half-price ticket office around the corner.

Stampede seats: If a performance is not sold out, available seats are sold 15 minutes prior to show time for $10 each, on a first-come, first-served basis. Call ahead before you go to find out if stampede seats will be sold.

25 and under: Anyone age 25 and under may purchase tickets for $10 to any performance, based on availability. You can get them in advance or day of performance. Unless the show is expected to sell out, there's almost always availability.

Pay-what-you-can: The first two performances of each production (usually Mon and Tues) qualify. Tickets are sold 90 minutes prior to show time—cash or check only—on a first come, first-served basis. To be reasonably assured of a ticket, be in line by 6:30pm for the 8pm show. Some theatergoers start forming a line at 5:30pm, but the line doesn't really start growing until just before 6:30pm, according to a box office spokesman.

Theatre. These are the shows that are splashed across the national media. They have big-name casts, and a ticket costs a mini-fortune. Prices for tickets to "Legends," a 2006 Broadway-bound comedy starring Joan Collins and Linda Evans cost $126 for the best orchestra seating at the National Theatre. "Off-Broadway" in Washington is how I refer to the many small local theaters—more than three dozen in the metropolitan area—that create their own productions. They hire mostly local talent but also top out-of-town actors (many from the real Off-Broadway) and occasionally a Broadway, Hollywood, or TV star. The auditoriums are small, seating no more than a few hundred, so you get a close-up look at the actors. Several companies make a point of commissioning new plays, which get their world premiere in Washington. Or they seek out the hot new works from up and coming playwrights that have scored big recently in New York, London, and other major theater cities worldwide. Aimed primarily at sophisticated adult audiences, they tend to be more provocative, even controversial. Graphic language, sexual scenes, and nudity are fairly common. (Sure, these theaters also put on plays and musicals suitable for the whole family, but if you are taking the kids make sure you know what you are getting.) Usually—but not always—productions display the same polish you expect in the Big Apple.

And the price of tickets doesn't empty your wallet. In 2006, the top local companies charged about $35 to $75 (best seats) per ticket, depending on the day of performance and the show itself. But you usually can get half-price or last-minute seats at a steep discount.

The theater season runs from September to June, but July and August aren't completely overlooked.

The stage with the most daring, most outrageous, and consistently most interesting plays more than two decades after it was founded is funky **Woolly Mammoth** ✯✯✯ (641 D St. NW; ☎ 202/289-2443; www.woollymammoth.net; Metro: Archives–Navy Memorial). In May 2005, the company finally got its own specially designed 265-seat theater in the heart of the lively Penn Quarter neighborhood. Stylish but spare, it has a blue-collar industrial look with exposed iron beams and lots of concrete. A regional and national leader in developing new plays, it has set a goal of "exploring the edges of theatrical style." In June 2007, as an example, it staged the world premiere of Sarah Ruhl's latest quirky comedy centered around a cellphone; Ruhl was a 2006 winner of a McArthur Genius Grant. Full-price tickets are $30 and $38 on Wednesday, Thursday, and Sunday evenings; $36 and $44 on Friday evening and Saturday matinee; $40 and $48 on Saturday evening. Age 65 and older get a $5 discount.

> *"Washington is no doubt the boss town in the country for a man to live in who wants to get all the pleasure he can . . . But I wasn't built that way...My doctor told me that if I wanted my three score and 10, I must go to bed early, keep out of social excitements, and behave myself. You can't do that in Washington. Nobody does."*
>
> —Mark Twain, quoted in the *St. Louis Post Dispatch,* May 19, 1889

Almost as outrageous and similarly dedicated to staging important new works, **Studio Theatre** ✯✯✯ (1501 14th St. NW; ☎ 202/332-3300; www.studiotheatre.org; Metro: Dupont Circle or McPherson Square and 6-block walk; half-price "student rush" tickets sometimes available, 30 min. prior to shows on every night but Sat) is noted for its innovative revivals of older plays and its staging of contemporary plays that may have only recently debuted off-Broadway in New York. A major player in the redevelopment of 14th Street, it operates three 200-seat theaters in what formerly were automobile showrooms. In this still edgy neighborhood, the design is appropriately industrial urban. In 2006, Studio presented *The Long Christmas Ride Home* by Pulitzer Prize–winning playwright Paula Vogel, and revived Tom Stoppard's witty wordplay drama *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead.* Blending with its regular-season productions is Studio's 2nd Stage, which features even more unconventional productions. A recent example was *Reefer Madness: The Musical,* a parody of the 1936 anti-marijuana propaganda film. Regular tickets are $34 to $42 Tuesday, Wednesday, and Sunday evenings; $40 to $48 Thursday and Friday evenings and Saturday and Sunday matinees; and $46 to $55 Saturday evening. Add $10 for a musical. 2nd Stage tickets are $29. A $5 discount is offered to those over 62, military personnel, and students with valid I.D.

One of Washington's oldest and most-honored "little" theaters—and its largest—**Arena Stage** ✯✯✯ (1101 6th St. SW; ☎ 202/488-3300; www.arenastage.org; Metro: Waterfront–Southeastern University) is the largest theater in North America focused on American plays. Although it occasionally premieres new works, its forte is reviving American classics—including musicals. In recent years, it has scored successes with *Damn Yankees, Camelot, Guys and Dolls, On the*

Special Ticket Discounts at Arena

Arena offers several rate discounts:

- *FiveTwentyFive:* A limited number (10–20 per performance depending on the show) of $10 tickets is available for ages 5 to 25 for most performances. They can be purchased on the day of the performance until 30 minutes prior to curtain. Show up early at the box office to snag one of these.
- *HOTTIX:* A limited number (20–30 a performance) of half-price tickets are sold to persons for whom the regular cost of a ticket would be prohibitive. They go on sale 90 minutes before curtain and are available until sold out or 30 minutes before curtain, whichever occurs first. They must be purchased at the box office window. Call the morning of the performance for an update on availability.
- *Student discounts*: Full-time students (one student ticket per valid I.D.) get 35% off regular ticket prices. You can get this discount by phone or in person for every performance except Saturday evenings, subject to availability. You're out of luck only if the show expects to sell out.

Town, and *Candide.* African-American-themed plays, including several by playwright August Wilson, are another strong point. Arena's 900-seat Fichandler Theater adopted a theater-in-the-round design early on and has maintained it despite the obvious difficulty it presents to actors performing to an audience in four directions. The 600-seat Kreeger Theater is of standard proscenium design. A major expansion of Arena may be underway by the time you read this, necessitating a season in temporary quarters. Ticket prices are $51 to $64 Sunday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday evenings; $61 to $74 Friday and Saturday evenings; and $56 to $69 Saturday and Sunday matinees. The most expensive seating is for musicals. Seniors 60 and older get a 15% discount except for Saturday evening performances.

The classics, including Shakespeare of course, are frequently updated or given unconventional staging at the **Shakespeare Theatre Company** ★★★ (Penn Quarter, 450 7th St. NW; ☎ 202/547-1122; www.shakespearetheatre.org; Metro: Archives–Navy Memorial/Penn Quarter). The company, now 2 decades old, has been acclaimed as one of the world's greatest Shakespearean theaters. Like the other "small" theaters, its 450-seat auditorium, the Lansburgh, puts you up front—allowing you to watch the actors' lips. This is important at times because Shakespearean dialogue is not always easy to hear and understand even when spoken by the most articulate of actors. A second auditorium, the Sidney Harman Hall, is expected to debut October 1, 2007, allowing the theater to increase its shows from five to eight annually. Ticket prices are $31 to $63 Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Sunday evening and Wednesday matinee; $38 to $70 Friday evening and Saturday and Sunday matinee; and $44 to $76 for Saturday evening.

One-Stop Shopping for Discounted Tickets

To assure yourself of low-priced tickets for a variety of performing arts theaters and other events including Kennedy Center productions, head for **Ticket Place** (407 7th St. NW, between D and E sts.; ☎ 202/TICKETS; www.ticketplace.org; Metro: Archives–Navy Memorial/Penn Quarter; Tues–Fri 11am–6pm, Sat 10am–5pm). With occasional exceptions, tickets are available the day of performance only. Tickets also can be purchased online Tuesday through Friday from noon to 4pm EST. Tickets are sold at half-price. At the Ticket Place office, a fee amounting to 12% of the ticket's full price is added. Example: A $20 ticket is sold for $10. The 12% fee (from $20) is an additional $2.40, bringing the total to $12.40. For online purchases, the fee is 17%. So, a ticket originally priced at $20 would cost you $13.40 online. Half-price ticket events include theater, dance, opera, concerts, lecture series, films, and youth programs throughout the Washington Metropolitan Area. Usually, two dozen or more performances are listed—although some may be in the suburbs. At times, Ticket Place lists almost all the shows currently running in the area.

The assassination of Abraham Lincoln carved its name in American history. But since 1968, when it reopened after 103 years, **Ford's Theatre** ★★ (511 10th St. NW; ☎ 202/347-4833; www.fordstheatre.org; Metro: Metro Center) has worked to attain recognition also as an important local stage—serving as a living tribute to a president who loved the performing arts. Like Arena Stage, it spotlights the works of modern American playwrights, often with a political or Washington theme. An example is the 2006/2007 season, which featured *State of the Union* by Howard Lindsay and Russel Crouse, the story of an idealistic businessman aiming for the presidency. An exception to Americana is Ford's annual holiday production of Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol.* Ticket prices are $44 and $46 Tuesday though Thursday evening; $49 and $52 Friday and Saturday evening; $34 and $36 weekday matinee; and $49 and $52 weekend matinee. *A Christmas Carol* tickets are slightly higher at $36 to $55. I've detailed Ford's history in Chapter 5 (p. 113).

As the East Coast's only National Center for the Latino Performing Arts, **GALA Hispanic Theatre** ★ (3333 14th St. NW; ☎ 202/234-7174; www.galatheatre.org; Metro: Columbia Heights) presents classical and contemporary plays in Spanish with English subtitles. The 2006 season began with a 17th-century play about Don Juan, written by one of the few women playwrights of Spain's Golden Age. The U.S. premiere of a play from Argentina followed. Tickets are $30 Thursday and Sunday; $34 Friday and Saturday. Students, seniors (65 and older), and military pay $20 and $26.

MORE STAGES

The following theaters sometimes create their own productions. But more often they are the venue for visiting shows that are either en-route to a Broadway

opening or are a post-Broadway road show presentation. The auditoriums are huge, reducing your chance of seeing an actor's tears or sly winks. Many productions are first-rate, starring name casts. Others seem to have wearied from the road, and the cast looks tired and sloppy. This is seldom, if ever, a problem with the "small" theaters described above. Check out the critics' reviews beforehand if possible. Both the *Washington Post* (www.washingtonpost.com) and the *City Paper* (www.washingtoncitypaper.com) keep reviews on their sites for the complete runs of these shows (and often longer).

National Theatre (1321 Pennsylvania Ave. NW; ☎ 202/628-6161; www.nationaltheatre.org; Metro: Metro Center). One of America's oldest, continually operating theaters, the National, unfortunately, is often dark. Fully refurbished, it's a lovely old theater that approximates in look the old show houses of New York's theater district.

Warner Theatre (1299 Pennsylvania Ave. NW; ☎ 800/551-7328 and 202/397-7328; www.warnertheatre.com; Metro: Metro Center). A beautifully restored former movie palace, the Warner hosts touring Broadway productions, solo performers, dance groups, and pop music reviews. The 2006/2007 season featured Mel Brooks' Tony-winning musical comedy *The Producers* and Molly Ringwald in the revival of another hit musical, *Sweet Charity.* Each holiday season, most of December is devoted to the Washington Ballet's production of "The Nutcracker," often a sellout. Tickets at the Warner average about $40 for many shows, climbing to $75 or more for musicals.

Atlas Performing Arts Center (1333 H St. NE; ☎ 202/399-7993; www.atlasarts.org; Metrobus [X2] from near the McPherson Square, Metro Center and Gallery Place-Chinatown). A former movie theater, the Atlas has been renovated as a community arts venue. It is a leader in the revitalization of H Street NE, part of which was badly damaged in the riots following the assassination of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King in 1968 and has recovered slowly. It hosts some presentations of The

Shakespeare Theater Company Discounts

The Shakespeare Theatre's discounted tickets generally are not available for opening nights and Friday and Saturday evening performances. For other shows:

Seniors: Age 60 and older get a 20% discount.

Student preview week: Students get a 50% discount on preview week performances, usually the first Tuesday through Sunday. These can be ordered by phone.

Student Rush Tickets: The price is $10 and available during preview week 1 hour prior to curtain.

Student regular run discount: A 50% discount during the rest of the run when available 1 hour before curtain. Call ahead to check on availability.

Standing room only: Standing room is offered only for sold-out performances. Tickets at $10 are sold 1 hour before curtain. Cash only.

Pay-what-you-can: Available for some performances. Check with the box office by phone or in person for availability.

Cultural Colossus

If any one thing boosted Washington's reputation as a city of the cultural arts, it was the 1971 debut of the **John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts** (On the Potomac River at Virginia Avenue, New Hampshire Avenue, and 25th Street NW; ☎ 800/444-1324 and 202/467-4600; www.kennedy-center.org; Metro: Foggy Bottom–GWU, with 3-block walk south via New Hampshire Avenue; free tours; Mon–Sat 10am–9pm and Sun noon–9pm). Considered the nation's busiest arts venue, the center presents more than 3,000 performances annually to an audience of nearly 2 million. Major artists and groups from around the world appear in opera, dance, musicals, jazz, classical concerts, theater, and more. The National Symphony Orchestra and the Washington National Opera make their home at the Kennedy Center. In 2006, you could have heard opera soprano Deborah Voigt in a concert performance of Strauss' *Salome;* violinist Gil Shaham in the *Brahms Concerto in D major for Violin and Orchestra;* Sir James Galway in a world premiere of F.J. Berg's *Concert for Alto Flute and Orchestra,* and pianist Andre Watts, playing Saint-Saens *Piano Concerto No. 2 in G. minor.* At the same time the center serves as a living memorial to President Kennedy, a patron of the performing arts.

Ideally, you should attend a performance to get the full Kennedy Center experience. On a budget, catch the nightly free performances, a series dubbed the **Millennium Stage,** presented in the Grand Foyer. They tend to feature up-and-coming artists in all categories from opera to Cajun and country. No reservations are necessary. Check out the next month's schedule on the center's website (see above). **Free escorted tours** are engaging no matter your musical tastes. They're offered Monday through Friday 10am to 5pm and Saturday and Sunday 10am to 1pm on a walk-up basis—that is, no set times. (Call ☎ 202/416-8340 for information.) On the tours, visitors get a peek inside the center's three major theaters if no performance is scheduled.

Architectural critics generally slammed the center when it was built. It is, basically, a giant rectangular box of white marble. But its Potomac River setting is lovely. At night, theatergoers gather on the River Terrace at intermission to watch the gleaming lights of Georgetown just upriver. Inside, an aura of grandeur greets you. Most visitors enter first at the **Hall of States,** which is lined by flags representing all 50 states, five territories, and the District of Columbia. A second parallel entrance several yards south leads to the **Hall of Nations,** which flies the flags of all the countries with which the United States has diplomatic relations. Ticket booths,

restroom access, information desks, elevators, and a gift shop are found in the halls.

Both halls lead on plush red carpets to the even more elegant **Grand Foyer,** which is the shared lobby for the Concert Hall, Opera House, and Eisenhower Theater. Its length of 630 feet makes it one of the largest rooms in the world. You could lay the Washington Monument on its side in the foyer and still have 75 feet to spare. Huge windows look out to the Potomac. In the hall is a massive bronze bust of Kennedy, a well-regarded work that captures the intelligence and wit that captivated so many people. Nearby interactive exhibits examine Kennedy's life and legacy.

If you get a look inside the **Concert Hall,** note the soaring pipes of the 4,144-pipe organ behind the stage. In the **Opera House,** the sparkling crystal chandelier, which looks like giant clusters of snowflakes, was a gift to the center from Austria. Canada gave the **Eisenhower Theater** its distinctive curtain of red and black hand-woven wool. The **Roof Terrace Restaurant and Bar,** an upscale eatery, and the more affordable **KC Café**, offering carry-out items, are located on the upper level, reached by elevator.

Half-price Kennedy Center tickets. Half-price tickets to many performances are offered to students (grade school to graduate level); seniors age 65 or older; enlisted military grades E-1 to E-4; and disabled persons with one companion. Appropriate identification is needed for everyone except grade school students. Advance half-price tickets can be purchased for the first performance of many shows. Otherwise, tickets may be purchased the day of the show. For matinees, they become available at noon; for evening performances, at 6pm. These tickets are often limited in number or not available at all for sold-out presentations. The Kennedy Center information number (see above) provides additional details.

Kennedy Center Theater Lab (see Kennedy Center above). This 350-seat theater rates special mention. Since 1987, it has been presenting *Shear Madness,* a comedy whodunit set in a hair-styling salon in present-day Georgetown. Frequent new dialogue additions touching on current events keep it fresh. At the end, the audience is invited to solve the crime. It's light and hokey but fun and easy to take after a day of heavy sightseeing. "Shear Madness" now ranks as the third longest-running play in the history of the American theater. Numbers 1 and 2 are "Shear Madness" productions in Boston and Chicago. Tickets range from $38 to $50. But check out Ticket Place before you commit. Since the theater is so small, all seats are good.

Washington by Moonlight

When the sun goes down, Washington takes on a different, almost magical look. Lighted at night, the white marble monuments and memorials seem to glow, looking their most beautiful. Plus, the night air is cooler and the summer throngs are thinner. National Park rangers are on duty at most of the sites until midnight; they are quite safe to visit. But I would hesitate to walk between them after dark. A tour by trolley, tram, bus, Segway, or bike is a safer alternative. The tours visit the same sights, and the dialogue I've heard is pretty uniform, not varying much from company to company. So make your choice on the type of transportation you prefer or the price.

- **Old Town Trolley** (Union Station; ☎ 202/832-9800; Metro: Union Station; www.trolleytours.com; $32 adults, $16 children 4–12; spring–summer daily 7:30pm, winter–fall daily 6:30pm). The firm's "Monuments by Moonlight" trolley tour lasts about 2½ hours. Reservations by phone (see above) are required. Departure is from Union Station.
- **Tourmobile Sightseeing** (Union Station; ☎ 202/554-5100; Metro: Union Station; www.tourmobile.com; $20 adults, $10 children; 7pm). Called "Washington by Night: Twilight Tour," the tour lasts about 3 hours. Generally it is offered daily March through December, but the schedule can vary. Check the website or call. You might get more background information on the Old Town Trolley (above) and Martz Gold Line/Gray Line bus tour (below), but the cheaper Tourmobile tour should be fully satisfactory. Anyway, I think it's a lot easier to get on and off the trams than the trolley or the bus.
- **Martz Gold Line/Gray Line** (Union Station; ☎ 800/862-1400; Metro: Union Station; www.graylinedc.com; $35 adults, $17 children; daily 7:45pm). Dubbed "Tour L: Washington after Dark," it lasts 3 hours. Take this tour if you want to enjoy the tour in the comfort of air-conditioning.
- **Bike the Sites** (Old Post Office Pavilion, Rear Plaza, 12th Street and Pennsylvania Avenue NW; ☎ 202/842-2453; Metro: Federal Triangle; www.bikethesites.com; $40 adults, $30 children, Mon–Sat 7pm). The 3-hour ride, called "Sites @ Night Tour," covers about 4 miles. If I had a compelling urge to bicycle in the city, I'd do it on this night tour when traffic is light and daytime summer heat has abated somewhat.
- **City Segway Tours** (1455 Pennsylvania Ave. NW; ☎ 877/734-8687; Metro: Federal Triangle; www.citysegwaytours.com; $70; Apr 1–Nov 30 daily 6:30pm). A 4-hour tour, it travels much of the Mall. If you're determined to operate a Segway, then the night tour when you don't have to contend with foot and auto traffic is best. Remember, President George W. Bush, an athletic guy, took a tumble when he tried a Segway, and he didn't encounter vehicle and pedestrian traffic.

Washington Savoyards, a light opera company, and The Capital City Symphony, a community orchestra that formerly performed in Georgetown.

Lincoln Theatre (1215 U St. NW; ☎ 202/397-7328 for tickets; www.thelincolntheatre.org; Metro: U Street–African-American Civil War Memorial/Cardozo). Like the Atlas above, it's another former movie theater transformed into a performing arts stage that is helping bring life back to a neighborhood with a rich heritage. Its events calendar is eclectic: comedian Dick Gregory one night, the annual Duke Ellington Jazz Festival another, followed by a South American pop singer and an Indian dance troupe. Ticket prices vary by performance, from $15 to $60 and more. Check the web for schedule and ticket details.

CLASSICAL MUSIC OF ALL STRIPES

Washington supports an ever-growing opera company, an acclaimed orchestra, and an overflowing calendar of classical musical performances by local and touring artists, groups, and orchestras. And it does so without the government support for artists typical in many world capitals and without a strong base of business contributors. Obviously, classical music fans like what they are seeing and hearing and are willing to ante up for it. The prime performance venues are the Kennedy Center Opera House, the Kennedy Center Concert Hall, DAR Constitution Hall, and George Washington University's Lisner Auditorium. All are in the downtown area reached by the Metrorail/Foggy Bottom station. While up-front orchestra seats tend to be expensive, if you don't mind the balcony (especially at the Kennedy Center) ticket prices drop into the affordable range. At the Concert Hall, where the National Symphony Orchestra performs, dress is fairly casual. At the Opera House, when an opera is on the bill, folks tend to spruce up more, and you're likely to spot a few tuxes and evening gowns.

OPERA

With famed tenor Placido Domingo at its helm as general director, the **Washington National Opera** (Kennedy Center, 2700 F St. NW; ☎ 800/USOPERA or 202/295-2400; www.dc-opera.org; Metro: Foggy Bottom) has achieved world-class status. Founded in 1956, the company has made it a goal to develop new productions of familiar operas and champion lesser-known works of significant musical worth. In its 2006/2007 season, it staged the American premiere of Nicholas Maw's *Sophie's Choice,* which received its world premiere in 2002 at London's Royal Opera House. (Maw currently lives in Washington.) More familiar operas in the same season: Puccini's comic *Gianni Schicchi,* and the always poignant *Madame Butterfly.* I could tell you how I think the company rates on the world scene, but I'll let the experts do it. The British magazine *Opera Now* wrote: "Washington National Opera is carving out a new area of expertise . . . staging grand spectacles to exacting standards with precision and power not often seen at the world's top houses." During the fall to spring season, the company schedules more than 50 performances featuring seven or eight operas. Often they are sung in a foreign language, but simultaneous subtitles—as you see in French or Italian movies—provide an English translation. Keep in mind that many performances

An Alternative—Free Concerts

You don't have to pay big bucks to hear quality music in Washington. From fall to spring, the **National Gallery of Art** (On the Mall, 6th Street and Constitution Avenue NW; ☎ 202/842-6941; www.nga.gov; Metro: Archives-Navy Memorial) hosts free concerts by ensembles, duos, and soloists. Many ensembles, such as the Alexandria Symphony, the National Gallery Orchestra, and the Boston Consort, are from the Washington area. But performers from elsewhere in the country appear as do many from abroad who come under the auspices of their country's embassy in Washington. Many are professionals, often pursuing joint careers as performers and professors of music. On some evenings, you hear a soloist; on some evenings a duo; on some evenings ensembles of three, four, or more people. Performances are scheduled at 6:30pm Sunday in the West Garden Court of the West Building. Admission is first-come, first-served, beginning a half-hour before the concert.

A second series of concerts, October to May, is organized by the **Library of Congress** (Coolidge Auditorium, 1st Street and Independence Avenue SE; www.loc.gov/rr/perform/concert; Metro: Capitol South or Union Station). They are held at 8pm various nights of the week. Tickets are distributed up to 6 weeks in advance by Ticketmaster (☎ 800/551-7328; www.ticketmaster.com). A $2.75 service fee per ticket is charged, and there is a $2 handling fee for each order. Free standby tickets, if available, are handed out at the door beginning at 6:30pm the night of the concert. On the whole, the artists appearing at the Library of Congress tend to be more musically distinguished than those appearing at the

sell out—season ticket holders get first crack at them—so you might want to book in advance. Ticket prices range from $45 (rear orchestra and second tier) to $300 (premier box). You have to act fast to get the cheap seats. And one drawback: The subtitles aren't visible from rear orchestra. They are visible from the second tier, so you might want to opt for the loftier seating.

Opera discounts

Unfortunately, the opera management is stingy with discounts. Occasionally **Ticket Place**, the half-price ticket outlet (see box earlier in this chapter), offers seats. In addition, the Kennedy Center maintains a specially priced tickets program for many performances, including some opera. If available, half-price tickets are sold on day of performance at the **Hall of States Box Office** (Mon–Sat 10am–9pm, Sun noon–9pm). To qualify, you must be a full-time student, senior 65 or older, enlisted military (E1–E4 grade), or have a permanent disability. Tickets are not available for Saturday evening performances. **Standing Room Tickets** at $25 each are sold at the Box Office or by phone (☎ 202/467-4600 or 800/444-1324) only for sold-out performances. There's a limit of two tickets.

National Gallery of Art. Often the Library features works by composers whose scores are in its collection.

Every night of the year, the Kennedy Center hosts a free hour-long concert on its **Millennium Stage** (2700 F St. NW; www.kennedy-center.org/millennium; Metro: Foggy Bottom–GWU). Held in the Grand Foyer, programs begin at 6pm and last for about an hour. No tickets are required; just show up for seating or standing room. The performances are eclectic, featuring up-and-coming soloists, international troupes, and sometimes artists appearing in one of the shows on the Center's big stages. In a typical month, you might hear an American jazz quartet, native Quichuan singers from the Ecuadorian Andes, a French choir rendering Renaissance tunes, young singers from the Washington National Opera, a Celtic guitarist, a soulful Swedish vocalist, a pianist on the classics, bluegrass, country and even hip hop.

In summer the **Army, Navy, and Marine Corps bands** (www.usarmyband.com; www.navyband.navy.mil; www.marineband.usmc.mil; Metro: Union Station or Capital South) perform alternately Monday through Friday at 8pm on the west steps of the Capitol. No tickets needed.

Another summer offering, **Jazz in the Garden** (Sculpture Garden of the National Gallery of Art, 7th Street and Constitution Avenue NW; www.nga.gov/programs/jazz.shtm; Fri 5–8:30pm; Metro: Archives-Navy Memorial-Penn Quarter) features top Washington-area jazz artists. Picnickers welcome (no alcohol); take a blanket. No tickets required.

LIGHT OPERA

Washington has its own light opera company, **The Washington Savoyards** (☎ 202/315-1323; www.savoyards.org) which provides reasonably priced performances of comic and light opera, operetta, and musical theater. But it's best known in the city for its engaging performances of the works of Gilbert and Sullivan. The season runs from November through April with extended presentations of at least four works. Tickets range from $25 to $60. The Savoyards appear at the **Duke Ellington Theatre** (Georgetown, 35th and R sts. NW; Metrobus [D2], [D4], [D6], [D8] from Dupont Circle) and the **Atlas Performing Arts Center** (1333 H St. NE; Metrobus [X2] from near the McPherson Square, Metro Center, and Gallery Place–Chinatown). The Atlas is located in an edgy neighborhood that only recently has begun to be seen as a hot, still-developing nightspot area. Consider flagging a taxi when the show lets out.

CONCERTS

Washington's concert calendar is headlined by the **National Symphony Orchestra** (Kennedy Center, 2700 F St. NW; ☎ 800/444-1324 or 202/467-4600; www.

nationalsymphony.org; Metro: Foggy Bottom). Under the direction of conductor Leonard Slatkin and noted visiting conductors, it offers a lengthy September to June season. Performances in the Concert Hall are scheduled Thursday, Friday, and Saturday evenings with occasional Friday matinees. Founded in 1931, the 100-member orchestra has matured into one of the country's great ensembles. Over the years, it has toured and recorded extensively, and it is noted for the original works it has commissioned and premiered. Soloists in the 2006/2007 season included pianists Andre Watts and Martha Argerich, James Galway on the flute, and Joshua Bell and Gil Shaham on the violin. Tickets are $20 to $80, and the acoustics in the hall—including the back balcony—are excellent.

Visiting orchestras show up regularly, often under the auspices of the **Washington Performing Arts Society** (2000 L St. NW; ☎ 202/785-9727; www.wpas.org). It's a nonprofit organization founded in 1965 "to bring the world's greatest performers to the city." That's the same year I arrived in Washington, and since then I've watched the organization do a creditable job in achieving the goal. Its performances are varied—classical, jazz, dance, gospel, vocal, world music—and are held at the Kennedy Center, Constitution Hall, Lisner Auditorium, Warner Theatre, and elsewhere in the city. In 2006/2007, it brought the Cleveland Orchestra with Franz Welser-Most, the Kirov Orchestra of the Mariinsky Theatre of Russia, London Philharmonic with Kurt Masur, the National Philharmonic of Russia, and the Philadelphia Orchestra with Christoph Eschenbach. It also schedules noted classical soloists—pianist Jean-Yves Thibaudet—and ensembles—the Salzburg Chamber Soloists. Rates vary. For the London Philharmonic at the Kennedy Center Concert Hall, the cheapest seat (2nd tier) was $50. For Thibaudet, $35 (2nd tier) at the Concert Hall. A few performances go for $25 for any seat.

MORE LIVE DIVERSIONS

DANCE

The city's leading dance troupe is **The Washington Ballet** (☎ 202/362-3606; www.washingtonballet.org). A classical company performing new works and old, its season runs from October to May. Performances generally are held either in the Eisenhower Theater at the Kennedy Center or at the Warner Theatre (see earlier in this chapter). Tickets are expensive. At the Eisenhower, they range from $65 to $115; at the Warner, site of the annual *Nutcracker* performances in December, the range is $29 to $85. But they often sell out in advance. (Check the website for information on how to buy tickets, which varies with the theater.) The *Nutcracker,* adapted by artistic director Septime Webre, has a distinctly Washington flavor. George Washington stands in for the heroic Nutcracker and, you guessed it, King George III takes the role of the villainous Rat King. Act II is set among the city's blooming cherry blossoms. Formed in 1976, the company has earned a national and international reputation as one of America's finest companies.

The **Washington Performing Arts Society** and the **Kennedy Center** also bring major national and international dance companies to the city. (For schedule and tickets, check the websites above.) It's a very eclectic calendar, which in the 2006-2007 season featured the acrobatic Pilobolus, the Expressions Dance Company of Australia, an all-female dance troupe from the Ivory Coast called *Compagnie TcheTche,* and the Alvin Ailey and Paul Taylor dance companies.

COMEDY

America's funniest comics play the **DC Improv** (Downtown, 1140 Connecticut Ave. NW between L and M sts.; ☎ 202/296-7008; www.dcimprov.com; Metro: Farragut North). This is the city's only full-time comedy stage, attracting the big names on the circuit. Expect to hear lots of political jokes—in this city, few comedians can resist. After all, they've got lots of material with which to work. Big name performers include Jake Johannesen, a frequent guest on the David Letterman show, and Will Durst, the political comedian (perfect for Washington) who has earned a reputation as a "bipartisan smartass." Tickets are easy on the budget, generally $10 to $22 depending on who is appearing, but you must buy two additional items—defined as food, drink, coffee, or dessert. Admission is limited to age 18 and older. Show times are Tuesday through Thursday 8:30pm; Friday and Saturday 8 and 10:30pm; and Sunday 8pm. Weekend shows tend to be more expensive than weekday.

JAZZ

Opened in 1965 in an 18th-century red brick carriage house, **Blues Alley** (Georgetown, 1073 Wisconsin Ave. NW below M Street; ☎ 202/337-4141; www.bluesalley.com; 8 and 10pm nightly; Metrobus [30], [32], [34], [35], [36]; reservations recommended) is the country's oldest continuing jazz supper club and one of the best. The look of the place harks back to the jazz clubs of the 1920s and 1930s; the menu is New Orleans creole. Over the years Blues Alley has showcased such artists as Dizzy Gillespie, Sarah Vaughan, Charley Bird, and Nancy Wilson, and it continues to attract such top names as Admad Jamal, Les McCann, Marva Wright, and Rachelle Ferrell. The cover charge ranges from $20 to $60, depending on the artist or group appearing. Students get half off the cover charge for the 10pm shows Sunday through Thursday. Dinner entrees at the early show range from $17 to $23, and each honors a performer——as in Tony Bennett's "shrimp and artichokes" ($20). But to cut costs, dine elsewhere and take in the late show when available snacks are an easier $5 to $9.75.

Hear jazz in a more informal and less expensive (no cover) setting at **U-topia Bar and Grill** (U Street Corridor, 1418 U St. NW at 14th Street; ☎ 202/483-7669; www.utopiaindc.com; Metro: U Street–African-American Civil Rights Memorial/Cardozo). It was one of the first of the U Street nightspots when it opened a dozen years ago. Groups of mostly local performers alternate throughout the week in the narrow, brick-lined room with a vaulted ceiling and colorful contemporary artwork. Monday to Wednesday (from 9pm) and Sunday (9:30pm), settle in for mellow jazz and blues; on Thursday, it's Brazilian jazz (9:30pm); on Friday and Saturday (11pm), just jazz. If you go for dinner—a blend of Cajun, Creole, and Moroccan—the entrees ($13–$21) are a little easier on the budget, too.

For more than 25 years, Washingtonians have been able to listen to hot Dixieland jazz served up by the six-member Federal Jazz Company at **Colonel Brooks' Tavern** (901 Monroe St. NE; ☎ 202/529-4002; Tues 8–11pm; Metro: Brookland–Catholic University of America; no cover charge). The neighborhood pub, serving burgers and other moderately priced fare, has developed a strong following that turns out every Tuesday night for lots of foot-tapping and hand-clapping. The crowd tends to be older because the music doesn't seem to appeal to

younger people. Most of the players are retired federal employees; the clarinetist played for the U.S. Navy Band for 20 years. A night at the tavern is a slice of neighborhood life in Washington.

LIVE MUSIC CLUBS

Like most large cities, Washington is on the headliners' circuit. But it also generates plenty of good, up-and-coming local talent to keep the crowds showing up at the clubs. You will find plenty of music venues in Washington, but I've highlighted the two top clubs. How to choose between them? Check out who is playing the night you want to go, and pick the entertainment over the showroom. In early 1993, a group of musicians hoping to revive the tradition of independent music in Washington opened the **Black Cat** ★★ (U Street Corridor, 1811 14th St. NW between S and T sts.; ☎ 202/667-7960; www.blackcatdc.com; Metro: U Street–African-American Civil War Memorial/Cardozo; cash only), helping spark an explosion of indie rock in the past decade. Accommodating 600 at the huge 7,000-square-foot Mainstage, it presents a nightly show with a mix of local, national, and international artists playing both indie rock and alternative music. The *Washington Post*'s pop music critic calls it "the premier venue for independent bands." The Backstage, accommodating 150, features emerging indie rock artists in an intimate, cabaret-type setting. The cover charge, $5 to $20, varies with the show. Advance tickets for name groups are recommended and can be purchased from Ticketmaster (☎ 202/397-SEAT; www.ticketmaster.com). Tickets (without the Ticketmaster service charge) are sold at the door from 8pm to midnight on the night of the show. Patrons of any age are admitted, though management requires that those under 18 get their parent's permission or come with a parent. No cover charge is imposed at a third room, the casual Red Room Bar, which features vegetarian snacks. The Black Cat tends to attract a younger, body-pierced crowd. IDs are checked at the door, and your hand is stamped. I've heard of some complaints that the quality of the sound depends on where you are standing. So move around if you can if you're not hearing what you expect.

The city's top music club is **Nightclub 9:30** ★★★ (U Street Corridor, 815 V St. NW; www.930.com; Metro: U Street–African-American Civil War Memorial/Cardozo). Management promotes local talent but also brings in top-tier musicians. The play is primarily hip-hop, semi-punk, alternative, and progressive rock. The club was founded in 1979, when the late Jon Bowers, a young lawyer, purchased the eight-story building that houses it. The stage is huge, the sound system is state-of-the-art, and it's still packing in the crowds. The best views are from a stepped balcony that rings the room on three sides. ***Warning:*** Don't expect to use the steps as seating; the club is mostly standing room, and everybody in front of you will be on their feet. A historic note: The alley behind the club, where musicians unload their instruments, is the same alley through which John Wilkes Booth fled after assassinating President Lincoln at nearby Ford's Theatre. The cover charge, $15 to $40, varies with the act. Advance tickets can be purchased from Ticketmaster (☎ 202/397-SEAT; www.ticketmaster.com) or at the box office Monday through Friday noon to 7pm, weekday show nights noon to 11pm, Saturday show nights 6 to 11pm, Sunday show nights 6 to 10:30pm. From Sunday to Thursday, doors open at 7:30pm, and the first act gets underway (maybe) at 8:30pm. On Friday and Saturday, the doors open at 9pm, and the first act goes on 45 minutes later. All ages admitted.

Be Cautious

I've said it elsewhere in this guide, but it bears repeating as you hit the city's late night streets. Be careful, and don't flaunt money. No part of the city can be considered safe late at night, particularly such entertainment areas as Adams Morgan and the U Street Corridor. Stay on lighted, well-populated streets. If you're clubbing or bar hopping, try to go in a group and call it quits before closing time. Take the Metro in the early evening, but after 10pm flag a taxi back to your hotel unless the nightspot is within a block or so of the Metro station. Street crime is an occasional thing, but it can be violent and even deadly.

ANOTHER OTHER OPTION

For the hottest Blues and R&B acts nightly, check out **Madam's Organ Restaurant and Blues Bar** (Adams Morgan, 2461 18th St. NW at Columbia Road; ☎ 202/667-5370; www.madamsorgan.com; Metro: Woodley Park–Zoo/Adams Morgan and 10-min. walk). A funky bar and soul food restaurant, it's a notable neighborhood landmark. A different band plays every night, some on a rotating schedule that brings them back every week or so. Wednesday is bluegrass night. The cover charge, $2 to $7, varies with the entertainment. Shows begin at 9 or 10pm. For the curious: Madam's Organ is a play on Adams Morgan, the bar's neighborhood.

BARS AND DANCE CLUBS

Where can you go for music, dance, and drinks? The busiest and best-known hot spots are Adams Morgan, Georgetown, Dupont Circle, and the U Street Corridor. Georgetown tends to attract upscale revelers; Dupont Circle is popular with gays; and Adams Morgan and the U Street corridor are the edgy, up-and-coming hot spots—and the least expensive. To find out what's happening on the live music scene for the week ahead, check the Friday Weekend section of the *Washington Post* (35¢) or—actually the best source—the free *City Paper,* published every Thursday and distributed widely in the Washington area in street boxes outside Metrorail stations and at drug stores, coffee shops, bookstores, and in a wide variety of other shops. Gay and lesbian nightlife happenings are listed in *Metro Weekly,* a free magazine published each Thursday and also distributed widely in street boxes.

BARS

An entire guidebook could be written about Washington's bars. To introduce you to bar-hopping Washington-style, I spotlight my choice of the most interesting or offbeat. Scattered in close-in neighborhoods, each is a little different from the rest, attracting its own particular crowd.

Penn Quarter

Topping the local polls as the hot spot for young professionals (and the rest of us, too), at least as I write this, is the new **Clyde's of Gallery Place** ★★★ (Penn Quarter, 707 7th St. NW at H Street; ☎ 202/349-3700; www.clydes.com;

Beer and More Beer

Entering the **Brickskeller** (Dupont Circle, 1523 22nd St. NW at P Street; ☎ 202/293-1885; www.lovethebeer.com; Metro: Dupont Circle) is like descending into a dim dungeon. Lights are low, the walls are windowless brick, the ceiling is painted black, the dingy ruby red carpet doesn't look like it's been replaced since opening day. But Washington beer fans love it because this dive may well have the largest beer menu *in the world*. All in all it serves about a thousand varieties from around the world, so many that the beer menu is actually a thick, little pamphlet. Dozens of American beers, of course, but plenty of international brews too. Romantic memories of old Cyprus? Down a Keo ($5.50) to bring back those days. Backpacked through Estonia? You'll remember Saku ($4.95). Let me tell you about Carnival in Trinidad—over a pair of Carib Lagers ($3.75). You get the picture; if it's brewed, the Brickskeller probably sells it, and the list keeps growing. None sell for under $3, and some go for more than $40.

There's not much difference between the downstairs and upstairs bars—both are claustrophobic when crowded. But upstairs does boast 14 taps for from-the-keg imbibing.

Ofe Atu—That's "down the hatch" in Tonga, a little lesson in toasts from around the world the bar tosses in with your beer.

Metro: Gallery Place–Chinatown). It draws a well-dressed crowd that engages in lots of happy hour chatter in a clubby mahogany and brass setting. The wings, beer, and classic cocktails are perennial Clyde's favorites. This locale is the latest of a chain of 14 Washington-area Clyde's restaurants and bars. The firm's continued growth is testimony to its popularity with the home folks.

Downtown

In a fun and funky mood, make it the **Hotel Helix Lounge** ★★★ (Logan Circle, 1430 Rhode Island Ave. NW between 14th and 15th sts.; ☎ 202/462-9001; www.hotelhelix.com; Metro: Dupont Circle). The bar menu tempts creative types with zany cocktails served up in a glitzy setting you might more likely find in Hollywood or Las Vegas. The ever-changing lighting morphs from a warm gold to deep blue while you sit on oversized cushions taking in the lively scene. For a fruity taste of Buenos Aires, try the Mango Tangotini, a blend of Stoli Vodka Ohranj, mango and tangerine liqueur, and a splash of orange juice ($9).

When she's in town, a presidential daughter is known to make the scene at the **Bottom Line** ★ (Downtown, 1716 I St. NW at 17th Street; ☎ 202/298-8488; www.thebottomlinedc.com; Metro: Farragut West). Despite its celebrity clientele, it's a friendly and well-priced basement bar. Tiffany-style lamps set the tone for its conservative decor, and the clientele tends towards suits and ties. Change out of shorts and tank tops before you go. This is a bar for older visitors, no longer on the prowl for a mate, who are looking for a relaxing drink and quiet conservation.

With good reason, *GQ* magazine chose a Washington bar as one of the 10 best soccer bars in America. It's the **Lucky Bar** ✯✯ (1221 Connecticut Ave. NW at M Street; ☎ 202/331-3733; www.luckybardc.com; Metro: Dupont Circle). Seedy in look, it boasts 25 TV sets and nearly every bottled beer brewed in Europe. The bar, occupying a narrow front room and a larger upstairs main floor, draws a large international crowd who show up on Saturday and Sunday to cheer on the home country team. Dress any way you care to; the bike messengers and other budget imbibers who flock to the place for cheap draft beer set the tone.

Adams Morgan

The neighborhood hangout where you can peck away at your laptop is **Tryst Coffeehouse and Bar** ✯✯✯ (Adams Morgan, 2459 18th St. NW near Columbia Road; ☎ 202/232-5500; www.trystdc.com; Metro: Woodley Park-Zoo/Adams Morgan). Not your traditional bar, Tryst looks more like the common room of a college dorm. As such, it may be setting a new trend. Busboys & Poets (see below) adopted much the same format. A large room with big windows looking out onto the bustling Adams Morgan scene, it is furnished with sofas and easy chairs wrapped around large coffee tables. Stop by to linger over a latte, grab a sandwich, or try something from the martini menu. Tryst is a perennial "in" place for the under-30 crowd.

On the edge of the sometimes intimidating Adams Morgan hubbub—raucous throngs, congested traffic—the **Adams Mill Bar and Grill** (1813 Adams Mill Rd. NW; ☎ 202/332-9577; Metro: Woodley Park-Zoo/Adams Morgan) is a low-key bar, a place to relax with friends rather than pursue intimate conquests or catch a game on TV. In essence, it's a neighborhood bar for the neighbors. Still, as an outsider, you will be welcome as long as you don't intrude on the easy-going ambiance. After work, it's popular with young professionals. In warm weather, the big attraction is the huge outdoor patio, certainly the largest in Adams Morgan. You will find a good selection of beers on tap.

U Street Corridor

Table tennis, anyone? It's the crowd-pleasing gimmick at **Cue Bar** (U Street Corridor, 1115 U St. NW at 11th Street; ☎ 202/332-7665; www.cuebardc.com; Metro: U Street/African-American Civil War Memorial/Cardozo). Five blue-felt pool tables gave this spacious basement bar its name, but raging Ping-pong matches are what's hot. A new entry on the developing U Street scene, Cue Bar displays the modern, somewhat industrial look of concrete posts and metal shelves. Two dart lanes add to the recreational options, and the high-tech TV screens are tuned to whatever sporting event is being broadcast. Despite its newness, the bar exudes downhome vibes that are drawing a mix of ages and races.

Literary and artsy types, intellectuals, and lefty Democrats will feel right at home at **Busboys & Poets** ✯✯ (U Street Corridor, 2021 14th St. NW at V Street; ☎ 202/387-POET; www.busboysandpoets.com; Metro: U Street-African-American Civil War Memorial/Cardozo). In this Democratic city, there may be a right-wing equivalent, but I've not been able to find it—well, one that displays its politics so boldly as this defiantly left of center establishment. Visitors to Washington sometimes are surprised that the city remains true blue despite the occasional influx of Republicans, who until the 2006 elections held the White House, Senate, and

House. But those of us who live here continue to vote overwhelmingly for Democrats. Democratic Party leaders generally support statehood for Washington because it would give the party more assured representation in Congress; that's why Republicans fight the move. If you want to argue the question of D.C. statehood, I'm sure any barkeep or patron of Busboys & Poets would be glad to oblige.

Maybe the grooviest DJ bar in town is "Gate 54," the downstairs lounge at **Café Saint-Ex** (U Street Corridor, 1847 14th St. NW at S Street; ☎ 202/265-7839; www.saint-ex.com; Metro: U Street–African-American Civil War Memorial/Cardozo; after 10pm nightly). An American bistro with an Art Deco/airplane decor—named for aviator/author Antoine de Saint-Exupery—where DJs spin classic jazz, bossa nova, Brit pop, '70s soul funk, down tempo electronica, and more. When I first chanced on the bar a while back, it struck me as the next best thing to a French sidewalk cafe. I saw it first in summer, when a cluster of outside tables tempted me to sit for a while sipping a cooling glass of white wine while I people-watched (as one does in Paris). Inside, it displays the timeless quality of an elegantly aging French bistro.

Georgetown

The city's best-known college hangout is **The Tombs** (Georgetown, 1226 36th St. NW at Prospect Street; ☎ 202/337-6668; www.clydes.com; Metrobus: [D2], [D4], [D6], [D8]). Georgetown University sporting memorabilia abounds in the kind of basement pub that sends old grads into nostalgic reverie. Mostly the crowd is young and hip; the Bush twins were regulars when they came home from college to see mom and pop in the White House. Low ceilings and dark wood and brick strike me as a bit claustrophobic, but nobody else seems similarly bothered. In the 1985 movie "St. Elmo's Fire," the characters played by Rob Lowe and Demi Moore hung out at The Tombs.

Outdoor imbibing with water views draws fair weather crowds to **Tony and Joe's** (Georgetown, 3050 K St. NW on the Potomac River; ☎ 202/944-4545; www.dcseafood.com/taj; Metrobus: [30], [32], [34], [35], [36]). Despite the throngs, it's a refreshing way to end the day. An upscale seafood restaurant, the eatery opens an outdoor patio for bar service in good weather. The river views,

By the Rules

Twenty-one is the minimum age permitted to buy alcoholic beverages in the District of Columbia. Some bars and clubs restrict admission to that age as well.

Bars close at 2am, except on Friday and Saturday nights when they remain open until 3am.

The D.C. Metropolitan Police Department is fully aware of the city's drinking hours. So don't drive if you have been imbibing. They'll catch you, especially if you are on the street after midnight.

Metrorail shuts down at midnight Sunday to Thursday. It operates until 3am Friday and Saturday nights. Party any later, and you are going to have to flag down a taxi.

Nightspot Shuttle Link

Two of Washington's liveliest entertainment areas are linked by shuttle bus, the **[98] Adams Morgan-U Street Link,** which operates nightly. A ride costs 25¢. The bus runs about every 15 minutes between the Woodley Park-Zoo/Adams Morgan Metro station and the U Street-African-American Civil War Memorial/Cardozo Metro stop. Buses are scheduled from 6pm to midnight Sunday to Thursday, 6pm to 3am Friday, and 10am to 3am Saturday. From the Woodley Park Metro station, the bus crosses Duke Ellington Bridge on Calvert Street NW, turns right onto 18th Street to U Street, and turns left on U Street to the U Street Metro station. Complete schedule is at www.wmata.com/timetables/dc/98.pdf.

looking out to the Kennedy Center, are gorgeous day and night. Go here only when the bar patio is open.

Capitol Hill

If you are a fan of piano bars, try this tropical looking bar. It's the bright yellow, Caribbean-looking **Banana Café & Piano Bar** (Capitol Hill, 500 8th St. SE at Pennsylvania Ave.; ☎ 202/543-5906; www.bananacafedc.com; Metro: Eastern Market). Lots of bright, zesty colors reflect the owner's Cuban and Puerto Rican background. Jazz, show tunes, and oldies but goodies alternate depending on the pianist (Tues–Thurs 7:30–11pm, Fri–Sat 8:30–10:30pm, Sun 7–10pm). It's gay and lesbian-friendly, but a mixed crowd mingles easily.

DANCE CLUBS

The downtown dance club scene in Washington has taken a few hits recently as popular spots shut down to become more lucrative office space. But two in places, easy to reach and in generally safe neighborhoods (unlike some of the city's other dance clubs), are still going strong. The hip set flocks to **Platinum** (Penn Quarter, 915 F St. NW at 9th Street; ☎ 202/393-3555; www.platinumclubdc.com; $15; Fri–Sun 10pm; Metro: Metro Center; age 18 and older). Occupying a former 19th-century bank building, it's a stylish place with a shiny chandelier dangling over the dance floor and sporting glowing orange bulbs. The bank bequeathed the club a grand staircase at the entrance, polished marble floors, and a high ceiling. And the bar occupies what was once a row of teller windows. You might think you were at a fashionable charity ball, at least until the throbbing beat of the music fills the large dance floor. The club caters to an international crowd, who are urged to show up looking good. This means no jeans (except dressy jeans on Sun) and no sneakers. Usually, a line forms early, and a doorman will check you out to make sure you meet the dress code. Friday night is dubbed VIP Night, when hip-hop, reggae, and international tunes are featured. There is free entrance for women arriving before 11pm. Saturday is the night for house, international, and hip-hop tunes from the DJ. Sunday features dancing to R&B, hip-hop, and reggae.

A New Nightlife Edge

Don't you know it. Ever in search of new thrills, the nightlife scene is shifting from still hot Adams Morgan and U Street to the **Atlas District** (H Street NE between 12th and 15th sts.). It seems Washington's trendy crowd is looking for some place new to bar hop because the now-familiar locations have gotten "tired and predictable." There's "no edge," they say. In a neighborhood of boarded up storefronts and carry-outs, new bars are popping up quickly. The catalyst has been the Atlas Performing Arts Center, where the Washington Savoyards company (see "Light Opera" earlier in this chapter) is headquartered.

Hotspots include the **Rock and Roll Hotel** (1353 H St. NE; ☎ 202/388-7625 [202/388-ROCK]; www.rockandrollhoteldc.com), a live/DJ concert hall in a former funeral home; **Showbar Presents the Palace of Wonders** (1210 H St. NE; ☎ 202/398-7469; www.palaceofwonders.com), an oddball performance bar with circus acts; and the **Red & the Black** (1212 H St. NE; ☎ 202/399-3201; www.redandblackbar.com), a New Orleans-themed bar with small, emerging music groups. The Atlas District is not easy to reach. From the Metro Center Metro station, catch Metrobus [X2] to get to H Street, and don't go alone. When the night is done, flag a taxi back to your hotel.

Somewhat less expensive, **Five** (Downtown; 1214 B 18th St. NW at Connecticut Avenue; ☎ 202/331-7123; www.fivedc.com; Metro: Farragut North; $10; Wed–Sun 9pm) is a more casual dance club with no dress code. It covers three levels with three bars. Wednesday features house and hip-hop tunes. On Thursday, indie, Brit pop, and '80s rule. Fridays groove to electronic dance, and Saturdays see house, disco, and hip-hop. The laidback club draws the 20-something crowd, who maybe aren't quite so hip (or well off) as the Platinum-goers. Though the dance floors on the first and second levels are large, you can expect to stand in line to get in most nights.

GAY NIGHTLIFE

Washington is home to a large gay and lesbian population, attracted—as I have said elsewhere in this guide—by its diverse, generally tolerant, and enlightened residents. The Dupont Circle neighborhood is considered the center of gay/lesbian nightline, though it definitely is not exclusively gay. Bars, clubs, and cafes catering to gays and lesbians are located in other close-in neighborhoods, including Capitol Hill and the U Street Corridor as well. An area in Southeast Washington, the locale of raunchier entertainment, was mostly shut down in 2006 when it became the site of the city's new baseball stadium.

Less edgy than the gay nightspots in New York City and San Francisco, the local crowd tends to consist of professionals, including a fair percentage of lawyers working for the government or major lobbying law firms. Keep in mind that the city has one of the highest rates of new HIV cases in the country.

The city's only exclusively lesbian bar, so far, is **Phase One** (Capitol Hill, 525 8th St. SE at Pennsylvania Avenue; ☎ 202/544-6831; www.phase1dc.com; Metro: Eastern Market). It's also the nation's oldest lesbian bar. An informal hole-in-the-wall kind of place, it sports a pool table, big TV screens, and a small dance floor. But it's notable amenity is the friendly, welcoming clientele and staff.

The newest gay bar (in a city with many) is **Be Bar** (Logan Circle, 1318 9th St. NW; ☎ 202/232-7450; www.bebardc.com; Metro: Mount Vernon Square–7th Street/Convention Center). Occupying a restored row house, it draws rave reviews for its cool decor, large martini menu, top 40 DJ tunes that propel you onto the dance floor, and the comfy couch that runs the length of the room.

In the Dupont Circle neighborhood, **Cobalt Nightclub** (1639 R St. NW; ☎ 202/462-6569; www.cobaltdc.com; Metro: Dupont Circle) is the hot gay spot for rip-off-your-shirt dancing. The club serves up wicked martinis on the first floor and let-loose dancing to top DJs on the second floor.

If you're looking for the gay equivalent of "Cheers," head for **JR's Bar & Grill** (Dupont Circle, 1519 17th St. NW; ☎ 202/328-0090; www.jrswdc.com; Metro: Dupont Circle), a casual brick-walled den at Dupont Circle where you can relax and hang out with old friends. On Monday nights, join a sing-along of popular Broadway show tunes, beginning at 9:30pm.

In the mood for swank, make it **Halo** (Logan Circle, 1435 P St. NW; ☎ 202/797-9730; www.theartoflounge.com; Metro: Dupont Circle and 5-block walk). Light and airy and contemporary in design, this lounge became an instant hit when it opened in 2004. On many nights, a line forms outside. Male and female fashion plates make the scene here, so dress in your finest. Relax on leather couches, sip exotic drinks, engage in quiet conversation, and enjoy a reprieve from loud dance music. Go here for a splurge, and sip slowly to keep the tab affordable.

11 Get Out of Town

Four rewarding, easy-as-pie day trips

WASHINGTON SITS IN THE MIDST OF WHAT MIGHT BE CALLED AMERICA'S historyland. Within easy reach are important reminders of the country's colonial, revolutionary, and civil war past.

George Washington's footprints stride the surrounding countryside in profusion, as do those of Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, and James Monroe. The Civil War raged for 4 years virtually in the city's front yard, and several of its blood-drenched battlefields are preserved as national historical parks. Despite its urban setting, Washington is not much more than an hour from scenic Shenandoah National Park, a near-wilderness where mist-draped ridges and hollows recount tales of early Appalachian pioneers. A huge outdoor playground, the park is a great big bonus for Washingtonians.

Each of the four destinations I describe—Shenandoah National Park in Virginia; Gettysburg National Military Park in Pennsylvania; Annapolis, Maryland's colonial capital; and George Washington's Mount Vernon Plantation in Virginia—can be visited in an unrushed day trip by rented car, provided you get a reasonably early start—let's say 9am. Gettysburg and Mount Vernon also can be reached by tour bus. Mount Vernon can also be reached by tour boat and by bicycle on the paved Mount Vernon Trail (see "On Wheels," Chapter 7, p. 171) and by public transportation (see "How to Get There" later in this chapter).

The most distant, Shenandoah, is about a 90-minute drive from most downtown lodgings. Weekday rush-hour traffic could slow you somewhat, but going and returning you will be traveling in the opposite direction of the overwhelming majority of commuters. Expect to be back at your hotel by dinner, unless you choose to stay awhile longer. Each of the four is a major attraction—the mid-Atlantic region's most significant ones, I think, outside the nation's capital itself.

MOUNT VERNON

Called to lead his nation first in war and then in peace, George Washington still found time—even while absent so often—to micromanage his beloved Virginia home and farm, officially **George Washington's Mount Vernon Estate & Gardens** ★★★ kids (Northern Virginia, 16 miles; ☎ 703/780-2000; www.mountvernon.org; adults $13, seniors $12, ages 6–11 $6; 9am–6pm daily Mar–Oct, 9am–5pm Nov–Feb). On a visit here, you'll meet the man and the farmer, getting an up-close and intimate look at the life of America's No. 1 national hero. By turns genial and even flirtatious, the Washington of Mt. Vernon is nothing like the aloof icon so often portrayed in classroom history texts.

For 45 years, the greater part of Washington's life, Mount Vernon was his home—and a major ongoing improvement project. The origins of the mansion are not known exactly, although Washington's grandfather may have built a tenant house on the site. George acquired Mount Vernon, then a modest six-room house, at the death of his half brother and soon began improving it and the grounds. Over the decades he more than tripled the size of the stately white, Palladian-style mansion (from 6 rooms to 21). He redesigned its grounds and outbuildings and acquired a total of 8,000 acres, which he farmed.

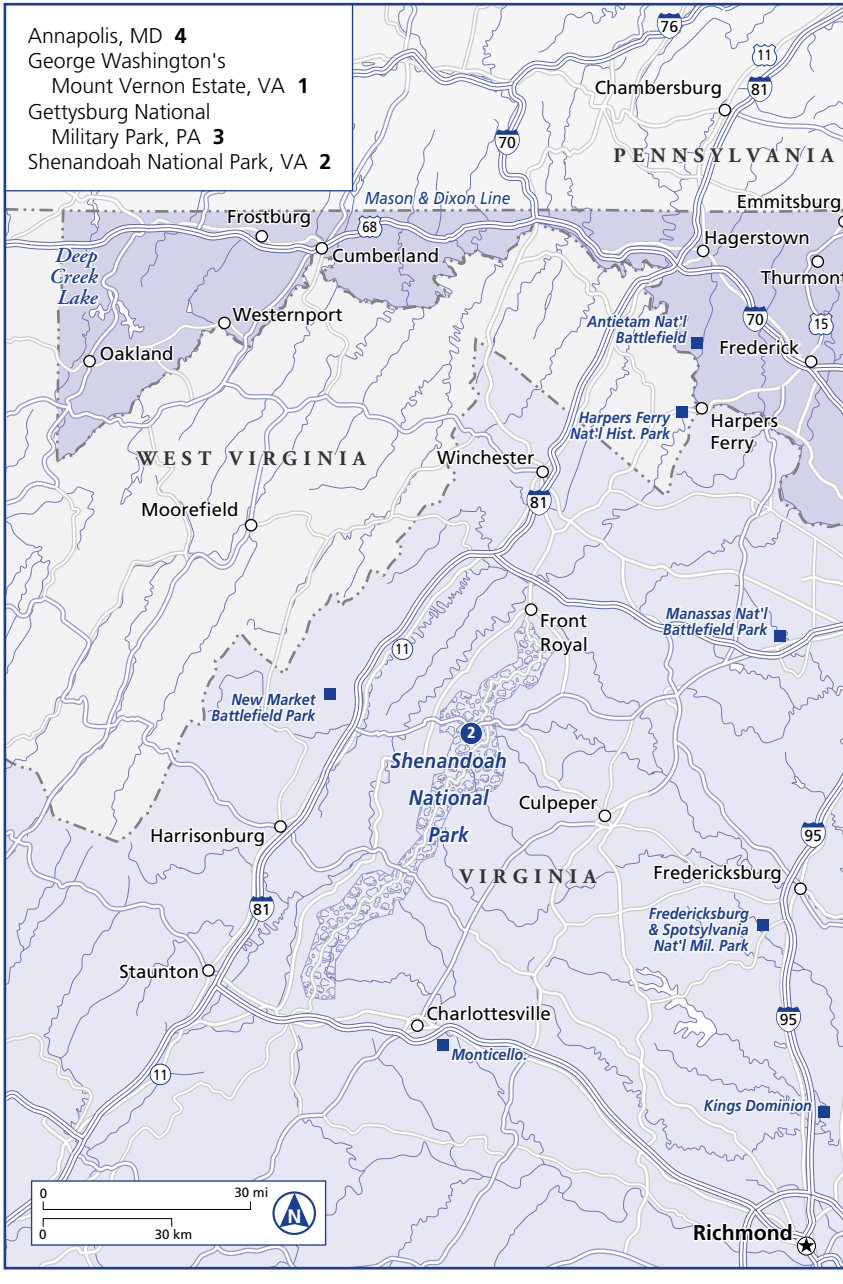
Today, the mansion and grounds look much as they did in his day, although the acreage has diminished to about 500. Even the grand view across the Potomac River, enjoyed from the columned piazza in front, remains much the same, preserved by national parkland. Thirteen trees from the landscape plan he designed still stand. Many personal objects are displayed, including the very bed in which he died on December 14, 1799 at the age of 67. He and his wife Martha Washington are entombed on the estate.

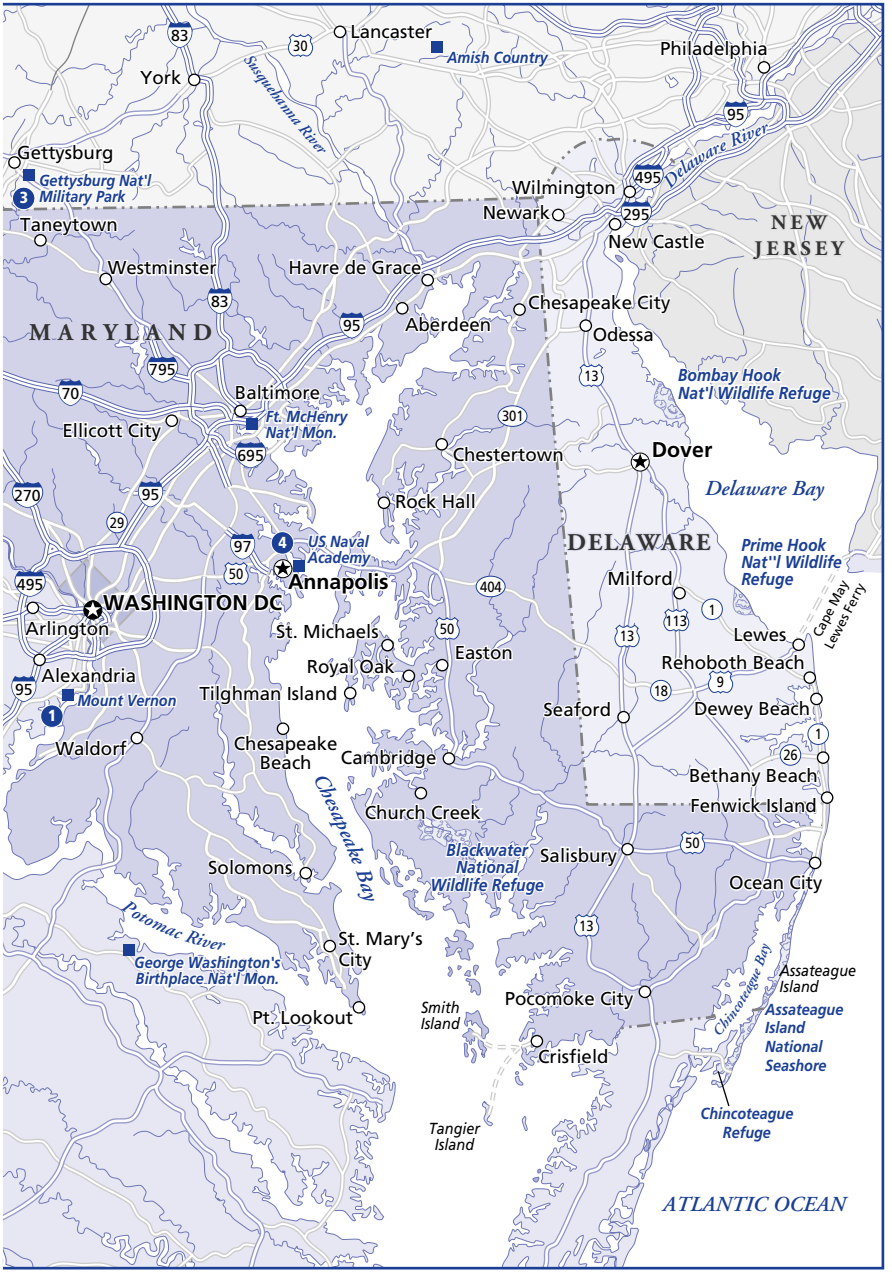
Mount Vernon, which attracts about 1 million visitors a year, is owned and maintained by the Mount Vernon Ladies' Association. Founded in 1853, it is the oldest national historic preservation organization in the country. Its Board of Regents, as the name suggests, is comprised solely of women. The association purchased Mount Vernon from the Washington family in 1858 and opened it to the public 2 years later. Indoor and outdoor exhibits include 20 original structures, a reconstructed 16-sided treading barn, 50 acres of gardens duplicating those of 1799, and a 4-acre working farm.

The fall of 2006 saw the completion of two major buildings—an orientation center and an education center. Because both are located just inside the estate's main entrance, I'll begin a tour with them. The **Ford Orientation Center** (as in Ford Motor Company) is where you first meet George as a regular guy, not a marble statue, grappling with the nonstop challenges of colonial life. This introduction is achieved by means of an 18-minute, Hollywood-style movie filmed primarily at Mount Vernon. It is shown in rotation in two adjacent theaters. "We have found in recent years that visitors are coming to Mount Vernon with only the most basic knowledge about George Washington," writes James C. Rees, Mount Vernon's executive director. The goal of the new facilities is "to show visitors specifically why George Washington, the most dynamic leader of his time, was chosen again and again by the Founding Fathers to lead this country."

The new center's other major attraction is **Mount Vernon in Miniature,** a one-twelfth scaled replica of the mansion. Its doorknobs turn; its windows open and close; the candles light, and the latches latch. The walls can be lowered and the roof removed to reveal detailed reproductions inside of furnishings, paintings, and books. A single whisker, plucked from a mouse, was the paint brush used to decorate mini porcelain pieces. The other new building is the **Donald W. Reynolds Museum and Education Center.** The Reynolds Foundation, one of the country's largest private foundations, donated $24 million. (Reynolds was a media entrepreneur who owned 70 businesses at his death in 1993.) The museum houses 500 objects related to George and Martha in six permanent galleries. These

Day Trips from Washington




Lancaster
Amish Country
Philadelphia
York
Susquehanna River
Delaware River
Gettysburg
Gettysburg Nat'l Military Park
Wilmington
Newark
New Castle
NEW JERSEY
Taneytown
Westminster
Havre de Grace
Chesapeake City
MARYLAND
Aberdeen
Odessa
Bombay Hook Nat'l Wildlife Refuge
Baltimore
Ft. McHenry Nat'l Mon.
Ellicott City
Chestertown
Dover
Delaware Bay
Rock Hall
DELAWARE
Prime Hook Nat'l Wildlife Refuge
US Naval Academy
Annapolis
WASHINGTON DC
Arlington
Milford
Cape May Lewes Ferry
St. Michaels
Lewes
Easton
Royal Oak
Rehoboth Beach
Alexandria
Mount Vernon
Tilghman Island
Seaford
Dewey Beach
Waldorf
Chesapeake Beach
Cambridge
Bethany Beach
Chesapeake Bay
Church Creek
Fenwick Island
Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge
Salisbury
Solomons
Ocean City
Potomac River
St. Mary's City
George Washington's Birthplace Nat'l Mon.
Assateague Island
Pocomoke City
Chincoteague Bay
Smith Island
Assateague Island National Seashore
Pt. Lookout
Crisfield
Chincoteague Refuge
Tangier Island
ATLANTIC OCEAN

include decorative arts furnishings used at Mount Vernon and artifacts from Washington's career as soldier and statesman. The largest exhibit, **"At Home with the Washingtons,"** offers a peek at their everyday lives. The Education Center features high-tech interactive displays and nine videos produced by The History Channel. To me, the most intriguing exhibit displays three life-size models created by artists and forensic and computer experts that show Washington as a teenage surveyor, a 45-year-old general at Valley Forge, and a 57-year-old American President. No portraits of Washington under the age of 40 exist; so you will be getting a first glimpse at young George (at least as technology sees him). At the exhibit's Valley Forge, he sits astride his horse. Nearby, a typical cabin for troops is cooled to winter temperature to show what his army faced at that brutal encampment.

After this introduction to Washington, head for the mansion. In summer, the line often is long, and you may have to wait up to 30 minutes. Much like a tour of the White House, you will be funneled in one side, climb to the second floor, descend and exit from the opposite end onto the piazza. This might take eight minutes. (It's a hurried look, so keep your eyes open.) On the first floor, the **Large Dining Room,** so called because it is two stories high, was the final addition to the house. In 1776, though threatened by British forces in New York, Washington sent off detailed instructions to his manager about its construction. It remained unfinished until long after the war because he could not find a satisfactory craftsman to provide the ceiling and woodwork decoration that he desired. The room's light green color is based on his original choice, and the wallpaper border also duplicates original fragments. An obvious question: Where is the dining room table? None is mentioned in Washington's inventory. It is thought he liked to keep the room open, bringing in trestles and boards to serve as a temporary table when a crowd was expected for dinner.

The central hall, called **The Passage,** stretches the width of the house from the front door to the river-view piazza. In summer, it was the most comfortable place to be because of the cross breezes, and it's where George and Martha enjoyed much of their informal social life. Look for the key hanging on the wall between the bedroom and dining room. A gift of General Lafayette in 1790, it was a key to the French Bastille. "It is a tribute," Lafayette wrote, "which I owe as a son to my adoptive father—as an aide-de-camp to my general—as a missionary of liberty to its patriarch." The key presumably has hung in the same location since Washington had it placed there. The walls resemble mahogany, but the wood grain is simulated by paint, per Washington's instructions in 1797.

The **West Parlor,** painted in Prussian blue, is regarded as one of the finest surviving examples of a colonial Virginia interior. Much of the family social life took place in this room; it's where the important family portraits hung. Five water colors to the left of the fireplace are originals. On the pediment above the mantel is a carved replica of Washington's coat of arms. An intense green in color, the **Small Dining Room** is furnished with a mahogany table, believed to be an original Mount Vernon piece. The **Downstairs Bedroom** was a customary feature of even large Virginia homes. Washington's extended family (including 2 secretaries) numbered eight, and they occupied the upper floor bedrooms. Guests were accommodated downstairs.

Also downstairs is **The Study,** partially lined in pinewood painted to look more expensive than it was. Escaping his crowded household, he managed his farm from this room. It's the first place he went each morning; his dressing table, purchased during his presidency, rests between the windows.

On the second floor are five smaller bedrooms and the master bedroom, known officially as **General and Mrs. Washington's Bedchamber.** The bed, made in Philadelphia in 1794, is where he died. It may appear short because of its width and the height of the posts, but it is 6½ feet long. After all, Washington was a tall man. This is where Martha managed the busy household, sitting at a French desk presumed to have been purchased in 1791 from France's first minister to America.

After seeing the mansion, you can tour the estate at your own pace. Peek into the kitchen, the storehouse, the overseer's quarters, the coach house, and the stable. Washington delighted in fox hunting; Thomas Jefferson considered him the finest horseman of the age. And don't overlook the tomb.

If the youngsters are getting antsy, hustle them off to the **16-sided Threading Barn,** a reproduction of the design Washington invented to thresh wheat. Initially, plantation slaves spread the wheat out on the bare ground, and horses trampled it to break out the grain. To protect the wheat from foul weather and to keep it clean, Washington brought the operation inside under the roof of his new barn. Horses continued to tread the wheat underfoot, but the grain dropped through slits in the floor to a collecting area below. You can watch an actual demonstration, standing inside the barn while the horses parade around you as if on a carousel. The barn is part of a 4-acre working farm, stocked with rare breed farm animals—oxen, mules, sheep, roosters, and hens—that date from Washington's era.

The estate offers a number of daily events from spring to fall. They include "Slave Life at Mount Vernon," a 30-minute walking tour; a 30-minute Garden and Landscaping Tour; and a daily public wreath-laying ceremony at the Washington tomb. Check the Calendar on Mount Vernon's website. Restrooms, a restaurant, snack shop, and gift shop are available.

HOW TO GET THERE

By Car

Drive west across the 14th Street (NW) Bridge over the Potomac River. At the far end of the bridge, take the exit to Reagan Washington National Airport and Alexandria. You will be heading south of George Washington Memorial Parkway. Continue on the parkway through Alexandria to Mount Vernon, where the parkway ends.

By Boat

Spirit Cruises (Pier 4, 6th St. and Water St., SW; ☎ 866/211-3811; Metro: Waterfront Station; www.spiritofwashington.com; $38 adults, $36 seniors, $31 children) runs Tuesday through Sunday cruises downriver to Mount Vernon, from mid-March to early September. Weekend outings continue through the end of October. The boat picks up passengers at 8:30am, returning them by 3pm. Three hours of that time is spent exploring Mount Vernon. If you have a full day, this is definitely the most relaxing way to visit Washington's home.

In Washington's Footsteps

George Washington Memorial Parkway links Washington with Mount Vernon. One of the country's loveliest river drives, the 16-mile route traces the Potomac River south of Alexandria. It was opened in 1932 to mark the 200th anniversary of Washington's birth. At the time, it was dubbed "America's Most Modern Motorway." A landscaped, limited-access road, it is dotted with picnic areas, pleasure craft marinas, and bird sanctuaries. Paralleling it is the Mount Vernon Trail, a paved bicycle route. Washington reportedly considered Alexandria, the town nearest Mount Vernon, as his hometown. Its historic Old Town preserves numerous 18th- and 19th-century structures dating from its origins as a prosperous colonial seaport. King Street, its main street, teems with shoppers and boutique browsers on weekends. At Washington Street (your driving route) and Cameron Street, consider stopping at red brick Christ Church (1773). Washington's pew is Number 60.

By Bus

Martz Gold Line/Gray Line (Union Station; ☎ 800/862-1400; Metro: Union Station; www.graylinedc.com; daily except Thanksgiving, Dec 25, and Jan 1) offer several tours of Mount Vernon, often in combination with excursions to Alexandria, or the top sights in Washington, D.C. itself. Rates start at $37 and go up depending on the length of the tour. Buses depart from Union Station.

SHENANDOAH NATIONAL PARK

Overdosed on museums and history lessons? Then take a day off and head for the hills along one of America's most scenic roads. The kids will love the chance to run a little wild. They may even spot a black bear, a flock of wild turkeys, or almost certainly, lots of deer. My choice, when I want to escape Washington's urban hubbub, is **Shenandoah National Park** ★★ kids (Northwestern Virginia, 70 miles; ☎ 540/999-3500; www.nps.gov/shen; $15 per car Mar–Nov and $10 Dec–Feb).

For motorists, the park's primary attraction is Skyline Drive, which traces the crest of the Blue Ridge Mountains for 105 miles, the entire length of the long, slender park. (The routing I suggest covers just over half the distance. Give yourself at least five hours for the whole trip.) Built over the course of 9 years, it was designed to provide the best views. From north to south, nearly 80 overlooks tempt you to enjoy them. Pick a half dozen at random; you won't miss anything by skipping more.

The drive begins in the town of Front Royal at Shenandoah's northern gateway, flowing south like a stream among the rocky peaks of the Blue Ridge. On either side of the road, forested slopes drop away steeply, forming a rumpled landscape of shady hollows and dark canyons. On the east, far below, lies Virginia's Piedmont, a land of rolling hills where green pastures and golden fields form a patchwork quilt landscape. On the west, you see the state's famed Shenandoah Valley, where the placid Shenandoah River carves glistening loops.

Unlike most national parks, Shenandoah was created from settled land. To make way for it, the residents had to move, giving up homes that had been in families for generations. In the early 19th century, as good farmland became scarce in the Piedmont and Shenandoah Valley, Shenandoah's first settlers, forbearers of the families who had to leave, moved up onto the Blue Ridge slopes. Eventually numbering about 5,000, they cleared small, hard-scrabble plots in streams valleys called hollows. They fished, farmed, and logged until the land wore out and the timber was gone. Some moved away. In the mid-1920s along came the National Park Service looking for Appalachian Mountain park sites near the East Coast's big cities. Officials chose what would eventually become Shenandoah and Great Smoky Mountains National Park in Tennessee. At this point, about 450 families remained within the park's proposed boundaries. Many sold out; others were forcibly evicted. Descendants still live in nearby communities. The Civilian Conservation Corps, a military-like job-creation program organized during the Depression, built campgrounds and other facilities, and President Franklin D. Roosevelt dedicated Shenandoah on July 3, 1936. Today a thick blanket of trees again drapes the mountains, and the returning wildlife is almost too abundant.

> *"I can truly say I had rather be at home at Mount Vernon with a friend or two about me, than to be attended at the seat of government by the officers of State and the representatives of every power in Europe."*
>
> —George Washington, June 15, 1790

The story of the Appalachian people who once lived along the Blue Ridge is told at the **Dickey Ridge Visitor Center** (Mile 4.6 from the northern entrance). From here the **Fox Hollow Trail,** a gentle 1-mile loop, leads to the former home site of the Fox family. A free trail guide notes that beginning in 1837 four generations of Foxes farmed a 450-acre plot on the east side of the ridge. You will pass the family cemetery; just beyond, the farm's spring still bubbles from the ground.

One of Skyline Drive's most spectacular stops is **Range View Overlook** (Mile 17.1). Instead of focusing on the flatlands far below, it directs your gaze to the peaks of the Blue Ridge, lined up like soldiers in a formation that stretches south as far as the eye can see. If you didn't pack a picnic, stop for picnic supplies or a snack bar lunch at the park's **Elkwallow Wayside** (Mile 24.1; ☎ 800/778-2851; www.visitshenandoah.com; Apr–Oct Sun–Thurs 9am–7pm, Fri–Sat 8am–7pm). For a shortened trip, exit the park at Thornton Gap (Mile 31.5; US. Route 211; see below) to return to Washington, or continue south. I recommend continuing on. In countless twists and turns, Skyline gradually climbs to an elevation of 3,680 feet. You are almost that high at **Stony Man Mountain Overlook** (Mile 38.6), so named because of the facelike shape of the peak.

The **Appalachian Trail,** en route from Georgia to Maine, parallels Skyline Drive the full length of the park, crossing the drive 28 times. To claim you have hiked part of this famous route, pull over at any of the well-marked trail heads and amble north or south for a few steps or a few miles, and then double back. Keeping to the ridge top, the trail is mostly level.

Motel and cabin lodgings and a restaurant with sweeping views and hearty country fare are available at **Skyland Lodge** (Mile 41.7; ☎ 800/778-2851; www.visitshenandoah.com; cabins, $64–$121 for two; lodge rooms, $87–$113; open late Mar–Nov). On a day trip, you aren't going to want to rent a room. But the cliffside setting at the drive's highest elevation is gorgeous; a gift shop sells typical national park souvenirs and sweatshirts; the food is good and, at the very least, the restrooms are clean. Just beyond, **Limberlost Trail** (Mile 43) is a 1.3-mile woodland circuit built for wheelchair access. It leads to a grove of massive hemlock trees, up to 3 feet in diameter and 350 to 400 years old. If you're up to a challenge, tackle **Dark Hollow Falls Trail** (Mile 50.7), a round-trip hike of about 1.5 miles. It drops sharply from Skyline Drive alongside Hog Camp Branch, a cascading stream that forms several scenic pools before plunging 70 feet down a series of rocky steps. It's the closest of the park's waterfalls to the drive. Going down is easy; climbing back up can be a struggle. **Big Meadows** (Mile 51; ☎ 800/778-2851; www.visitshenandoah.com; lodge rooms, $69–$132; cabins $85–$102; open mid-Apr to early Nov) is the appropriately named location of another park and visitor center. Stop here to view the visitor center exhibits, which focus on the park's history. If you skipped lunch at Skyland Lodge, the restaurant serves all-American fare. Continue south and exit Shenandoah at Swift Run Gap.

HOW TO GET THERE

Take I-66 west from downtown Washington (23rd Street and Constitution Avenue NW) to the town of Front Royal. Follow the road signs to the park gate just south of town. Continue south on Skyline Drive through the park to Swift Run Gap (Mile Marker 65). Exit the park east on U.S. 33, connecting to U.S. 29 north to I-66 east into Washington. The total distance is about 260 miles. To cut the distance to about 200 miles, exit the park on U.S. 211 at Thornton Gap (Mile Marker 32), connecting to U.S. 29 north to I-66 east. Ask for a free park map at the entrance gate. Check the website (above) for regularly scheduled ranger-led programs.

GETTYSBURG

Stand on Cemetery Ridge at Gettysburg and picture an army of 12,000 racing your way, well-armed and determined to kill you. Scary? You know it. Then put yourself in the ranks of the charging troops. Across the slender valley ahead awaits the enemy, equally well-armed and also well-protected by stone walls and other barriers. Even scarier, don't you think? At a Civil War battlefield park such as Gettysburg, you can put yourself into the actual footsteps of the combatants. You become an imaginary participant in the infamous Pickett's Charge, the horrendous turning point of the Civil War.

If you visit only one Civil War battlefield in your life, make it **Gettysburg National Military Park** ★★ kids (Southeastern Pennsylvania, 80 miles; ☎ 717/334-1124; www.nps.gov/gett; free; Sept–May daily 8am–5pm; Jun–Aug 8am–6pm). America was shaped by the series of bloody battles that raged on the outskirts of a crossroads village called Gettysburg from July 1 to July 3 in 1863. Until these three fateful days, the Confederate army under Gen. Robert E. Lee had been victorious, and the South's goal of separating from the Union seemed a possibility.

But Gettysburg changed this outlook. After Lee's disastrous loss here—Pickett's Charge was a costly failure—the Union gained the upper hand. In the months ahead, General Ulysses S. Grant would take command of Union forces, ultimately forcing Lee's surrender and ending the war at Appomattox Court House in Virginia on April 9, 1865. At Gettysburg, you trace the major events of the 3-day conflict—the bloodiest ever fought on American soil. But you and the youngsters also take home a good grasp of what preceded Gettysburg and what followed. This overview will serve you well when touring other Civil War battlefields.

Gettysburg is well on its way to becoming the Civil War's most authentic battlefield. Under an ongoing program fostering historical integrity, the battlefield landscape is being returned to the way it looked when the fighting broke out. A famous peach orchard and wheat field, both of which played an important role, are being replanted. Fences and farm roads are being rebuilt along their original routes. You can see the terrain as the soldiers experienced it. In 2008, a new museum, visitor center, and parking lot will be completed. This will allow removal of the current outdated facilities, which for decades have occupied part of Cemetery Hill. Once the new museum opens in a nonstrategic location about two-thirds of a mile away, this historic spot will be restored to the way it looked in 1863. Check out the progress when you visit.

Your first stop at the battlefield park should be the **Visitor Center** and **Gettysburg Museum of the Civil War.** An **Electric Map,** which will be electronically enhanced in the new museum (map fee: adults, $4; seniors and children 4–16, $3), recreates the battlefield landscape and its significant landmarks in miniature, and colored lights mark the movement of the armies. The accompanying narration is vivid and informative, setting the scene for a self-guided battlefield tour. The neighboring museum details a soldier's hard, dangerous life in both armies, displaying uniforms, weapons, camp gear, and primitive medical equipment. As I write this, the **Gettysburg Cyclorama,** a colossal circular painting of Pickett's Charge, is being rehabilitated and will be displayed again in the new museum. Using sound and light, the 20-minute cyclorama program seems to put you in the fury and chaos of the fighting. More than 10,000 figures are represented on the canvas—about half the number that actually fought on this day—and countless horses, cannons, and wagons. Before movies, cycloramas were considered exciting entertainment. I was wowed when I returned recently to see it again.

The **National Cemetery,** which President Abraham Lincoln dedicated with his Gettysburg Address on Nov. 19, 1863, is located just outside the old Visitor Center. In it are buried 3,555 Union soldiers killed at Gettysburg, their bodies removed from the battlefield over a period of months. Confederate dead remained buried on the battlefield until their bodies were removed to Southern cemeteries.

Now you are ready to take the park's **18-Mile Auto Tour.** You can drive the route on your own with a free detailed park map; hike part way; rent a bicycle in the town of Gettysburg and pedal the route; hire a licensed battlefield guide who rides in your car; or take a scheduled bus tour, offered two to six times daily from late March through August. Though it's expensive, I recommend signing up for a private guide at the Visitor Center; you can reserve up to 10 days in advance

(☎ 877/438-8929). An informative 2-hour tour for one to six passengers is $45 per car and takes in the battle's major landmarks. For information about guided bus tours departing from the Visitor Center, call ☎ 717/334-6296. They cost $24 per person.

The Northern and Southern armies clashed in separate engagements on the first 3 days of July in 1863. In those 3 days, the two armies experienced a total of more than 50,000 casualties—10,000 killed, 30,000 wounded, and 10,000 missing or captured. The South bore the brunt of the losses. If you are a summer visitor, you can suffer the same hot, sticky climate they endured.

The tour is laid out chronologically with 16 stops and takes you through the town of Gettysburg, which had a population of about 2,400 in 1860 (7,000 today). Plaques on houses indicate the 160 still-standing structures that date back to the battle. The bullet-nicked **Jennie Wade House** was the home (now a museum) of the only Gettysburg civilian killed in battle. The historic downtown area retains its 19th-century character, in contrast to the modern day tourist strip (restaurants, fast-food outlets, T-shirt shops, lodgings) adjacent to the battlefield.

On Oak Ridge (Stop 2), the **Eternal Light Memorial** is one of the battlefield's most prominent memorials. President and Mrs. Kennedy visited it shortly before the President was assassinated. It is thought that this is where Mrs. Kennedy got the idea for a similar eternal flame at Kennedy's gravesite in Arlington National Cemetery.

Most of the monuments honor Union soldiers, but increasingly Southerners are being remembered. At **Seminary Ridge** (near Stop 6), General James Longstreet, Lee's second in command, is shown in bronze reining in his charging horse. Note the lack of a pedestal; horse and rider appear as if they just emerged from the surrounding woods.

Little Round Top (Stop 8), a rocky hill at the southern end of the Union line, recalls a crucial second day battle. A Maine regiment successfully defended the hill, ultimately attacking the charging enemy with bayonets when they ran out of ammunition. The story is told beautifully in Michael Shaara's *The Killer Angels,* a Pulitzer Prize-winning novel.

The **Copse of Trees** (Stop 15) on Cemetery Ridge was the focal point of Pickett's Charge. Flags flying, his battle line of 12,000 troops stretching a mile long, advanced across open fields toward the Union line on Cemetery Ridge, where 7,000 soldiers awaited. In 1 hour, the Confederates suffered 5,000 casualties. The next day, Lee retreated to Virginia. The Civil War would last 2 more years, but ultimate Union victory was virtually assured.

HOW TO GET THERE

By Car

Gettysburg is about 80 miles north of Washington. Take I-270 north from the Capital Beltway (reached via Wisconsin Avenue north from Georgetown) to Frederick, Maryland. Connect to U.S. 15 north. A few miles into Pennsylvania, a large road sign will indicate the exit on Business U.S. 15 (Steinwehr Avenue) to Gettysburg. The military park will be on the right.

Ike's and Mamie's Farm

What did Ike and Mamie Eisenhower do when they retired from the White House to their Gettysburg farm? Often they welcomed distinguished visitors. But when they were alone, they set up TV trays on the sun porch for dinner and watched "I Love Lucy." This is one of the many personal glimpses of the Eisenhowers that make a tour of the **Eisenhower National Historic Site** (☎ 717/338-9114; www.nps.gov/eise; $5.50 adults, $4 ages 13–16, $3 ages 6–12; daily 9am–4pm except Thanksgiving, Dec 25, and Jan 1) rewarding fun. The 189-acre Eisenhower retirement home and farm is a 7-minute shuttle bus ride (the only access) from the Gettysburg Battlefield Visitor Center. Departures are every half hour during busy summer months; as few as twice a day in mid-winter.

By Bus

Martz Gold Line/Gray Line (Union Station; ☎ 800/862-1400; Metro: Union Station; www.graylinedc.com; daily except Thanksgiving, Dec 25, and Jan 1) operates 47- and 55-passenger motor coaches with near daily tours of Gettysburg.

DOWN COLONIAL LANES

In Maryland's capital, stroll down narrow, angled streets lined with what is believed to be the greatest concentration of 18th-century buildings in the United States. They are a historical and architectural treasure. About 50 structures built before the Revolutionary War still stand, many beautifully restored. Before 1776, the Chesapeake Bay seaport of **Annapolis** ★★ (Eastern Maryland, 35 miles from Washington; ☎ 888/302-2852; www.visit-annapolis.org) became celebrated throughout the colonies for the elegance of its architecture and the spirit of its political, intellectual, and social life. The evident prosperity reflected the city's status as Maryland's premier port. George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and other Founding Fathers joined wealthy tobacco planters for the gala winter season of horse racing, dancing, and entertainment in the style of London society. If they returned now, they could with good reason think that not all that much has changed.

Annapolis thrives today as perhaps the region's most charming and most romantic weekend getaway destination. My wife and I lived on the edge of the historic district for 5 years when a work assignment took her to the city. I fell in love with the place then, and we revisit frequently. Elegantly restored mansions, beautiful gardens, superb water views, sailing races, the U.S. Naval Academy along with excellent seafood, lively pubs, and off-beat shops conspire to attract visitors.

When Annapolis was laid out in 1695, its master plan featured the French-influenced baroque style, considered the most sophisticated of its day. Like those in Washington, the streets radiate from circles. A visitor can get lost for a moment wandering the odd twists. But the feel is one of intimacy, as if you are moving from one small courtyard to another.

To explore, park your car at the **Visitor Center** (24 West St.) at Church Circle and amble down the old streets, as the colonial residents did. To reach the Visitor Center, follow the Visitor Center signs after you turn onto Rowe Boulevard, the city's principal gateway. Join an escorted walking tour, trolley tour, or (my preference) tour on your own with the city's free walking tour guide. The historic district is compact, and distances are short.

Perched atop a modest hill on nearby State Circle is the **Maryland State House** ★, the oldest state capitol (begun in 1772) in continuous legislative use in the United States. When Annapolis briefly served as the new nation's capital (Nov 1783 to Aug 1784), George Washington appeared before the U.S. Congress, then meeting in the State House, to resign as commander-in-chief of the Continental Army on Dec. 23, 1783. The Treaty of Paris, officially ending the Revolutionary War, was ratified here on Jan 14, 1784. The **Old Senate Chamber** where these events occurred has been preserved as it was then. A life-size statue of Washington stands among numerous pieces or original furniture. The two-story red brick capitol, Georgian in style, supports an octagonal dome made of cypress beams. It is the largest wooden dome in the country. Not a nail was used in its construction, because they were scarce during the war. Instead, pegs hold the beams together.

Streets radiating from the State House slope down to the harbor. Two of the city's great 18th-century Georgian mansions, located within steps of each other and the State House, invite visitors inside. If you have time to visit only one, make it the **William Paca House and Garden** ★ (186 Prince George St.; ☎ 410/267-7619; www.annapolis.org; $8 adults, $7 seniors, $5 ages 6–17; from the last week in Mar to Dec, except Dec 24–25, Mon–Sat 10am–5pm, Sun noon–5pm, and from Feb to late Mar Fri–Sun 10am–5pm), which dates to 1765. Paca, a signer of the Declaration of Independence, served as Maryland's governor during the Revolution. He built his grand 37-room home in a five-part Georgian style. From the large central building, two passageways (called "hyphens") extend to smaller wings on each side. It is a graceful design, though Paca forgot to build a back stairway. It had to be added later, so (if for no other reason) servants did not have to whisk the chamber pots down the grand staircase. In the past century, it served as a boarding house and hotel. A move to demolish it sparked creation of the Historic Annapolis Foundation, which restored the house and its 2-acre formal garden to its colonial grandeur and went on to spur the city's historical revitalization.

Is it the most beautiful doorway in America? That's what the brochure claims. Certainly this Palladian-style door is lovely, but you'll have to decide for yourself when you visit the **Hammond-Harwood House** (19 Maryland Ave.; ☎ 410/263-4683; www.hammondharwoodhouse.org; $5 adults, $3 children; Apr–Oct Tues–Sun noon–5pm). Step inside the five-part house built in 1774 for a 40-minute escorted tour. It displays one of the best collections anywhere of Maryland's furniture and paintings from the 18th and early 19th centuries. Regarded by the experts as one of the finest colonial houses in America because of its carved woodwork and plaster ornamentation, it also tells a sad story. Mathias Hammond, a plantation owner and lawyer, reportedly wanted to build one of the finest houses he could for his bride-to-be. But he became so obsessed with the work that he all but abandoned

his young lady. She decamped, and he never lived in the house. William Harwood, a teacher, later purchased it, and in 1940 it was acquired by the organization that maintains it as a house museum.

Head now for the **Naval Academy** ★★ (Main Gate, King George and Randall sts.; ☎ 410/263-6933; www.usna.edu/visit.htm; 9am–5pm daily) for a glimpse of the uncommon life of the 4,000 midshipmen who reside on the 338-acre waterside campus. Visitors 16 and older will need a photo ID to enter; on foot only. The Armel-Leftwich Visitor Center is located a block inside the gate. A 12-minute movie, "To Lead and To Serve," is so upbeat about life at the academy you may well want to apply for admission then and there. The second-floor museum details the daily routine and explains many traditions. The campus is called "The Yard" because a dockyard preceded the academy at this location.

You can tour on your own, but I recommend taking a guided tour ($7.50 adults, $6.50 seniors, $5.50 students grades 1–12; Mon–Sat 10am–3pm and Sun 12:30–3pm). Your guide will fill you in on the traditions that have evolved since the academy was founded in 1845. In **Lejeune Hall's** swimming pool, you see where students jump fully clothed from a three-story diving tower in an abandon ship drill. Step inside **Bancroft Hall,** the massive dorm, to see a sample midshipman's room. Space is cramped, but everything is neatly stored, as the academy requires. The Chapel is where many a graduate has married in a crossed sword ceremony. In the ornate crypt below, the remains of naval hero **John Paul Jones** lie in honor. The guide will leave you here. On your own, visit the Naval Academy Museum's **Gallery of Ships,** just across the street. It's one of the world's finest collections of warship models from centuries past, many of them hand-carved.

These are Annapolis' historical highlights. Now stroll the residential side streets, where colored markers note colonial and other historic houses. The 19th-century, Queen Anne–style home at 138 Conduit St. is a standout. A white-shingled wedding cake of fanciful turrets and gables, known as the **Zimmerman House,** it was built in 1887 as the home of the Naval Academy bandmaster who wrote "Anchors Aweigh." After your historic stroll, browse the shops on Main Street. Chat with the yachting crowd, sunning on their vessels tied up at City Dock. And of course, don't forget to try a famous Chesapeake Bay crab cake sandwich at a waterside restaurant.

HOW TO GET THERE

By Car

Take New York Avenue northeast out of Washington, connecting to U.S. 50 east to Annapolis. From U.S. 50, take the Rowe Street, Historic District exit into Annapolis. At press time, no tours from Washington to Annapolis were offered, and there was no regular public bus service.

12 The Essentials of Planning

IN THE FIRST 11 CHAPTERS OF THIS GUIDE, I'VE CLUED YOU IN ON everything you need to know to enjoy a memorable and affordable stay in Washington—the major attractions, the best-for-your buck dining, lively nightlife, and appealing and reasonably priced lodgings. Now it's time to provide the odd bits of information that will help with all the other aspects of planning a trip, including getting to (and from) the city as safely, cheaply, and as problem-free as possible.

I begin with tips on pretrip planning: when to visit, how to book, visa and passport procedures for foreign nationals, insurance needs, and advance reading suggestions to enhance your stay.

Next, I discuss the many ways to get from Washington's three airports and its Amtrak train station to your hotel. You also will find information on all-night pharmacies, hospital emergency rooms, and how not to become a crime victim.

And I'll provide useful information for travelers with special interests and needs: families; senior citizens (entitled to numerous discounts); persons with disabilities; and gay and lesbian visitors, whom the city welcomes with open arms.

OTHER INFORMATION SOURCES

If you need more information than this guide provides (doubtful, indeed) about Washington hotels, restaurants, and events, contact or visit the **D.C. Visitor Information Center** (1300 Pennsylvania Ave. NW, Ronald Reagan Building & International Trade Center; ☎ 866/324-7386 or 202/328-4748; www.dcvisit.com; Metro: Federal Triangle; Mar 15 to Labor Day Mon–Fri 8:30am–5:30pm and Sat 9am–4pm; Labor Day to Mar 15 Mon–Fri 9am–4:30pm).

For neighborhood history, a daily schedule of lectures and arts events, and additional walking tours, check the website for **Cultural Tourism DC** (www.culturaltourismdc.org).

Information about federal attractions and events on or near the National Mall is available at three national park websites: **National Capital Parks-Central** (www.nps.gov/nacc); **National Capital Parks-East** (www.nps.gov/nace); and **National Register of Historic Places** (www.cr.nps.gov/nr/travel/wash/sitelist.htm).

WHEN TO VISIT

"Whenever you're ready," is my answer, which is my way of saying Washington never shuts down. Sure, members of Congress take one of their too many breaks in August—so you can't see them in action—and the current president is apt to be in Texas whacking away at brush on his ranch, so you won't catch a glimpse of

his motorcade racing by. But museums, monuments, and memorials are open year round (except for Dec 25), and those of us who live here see to it that cultural events and nightlife activity rarely slack off in any season.

If money is no object, the best time to visit, weather-wise, is spring and fall. In spring, nearly all of Washington becomes a flowering garden as a procession of bulbs (daffodils, tulips, irises), azalea bushes, and flowering trees (Japanese cherries, magnolias, dogwoods) fill parklands and neighborhood yards with vibrant colors. Fall brings more color in a surprisingly dramatic foliage display up and down our avenues (best in Oct). Perhaps it's not as glorious a show as New England's, but it's a dazzler nonetheless. In both seasons, the weather is mild, ideal for sightseeing. The drawback, of course—you could see this coming—is that they are both high-occupancy seasons at city hotels. You will pay peak rates, except at bed-and-breakfast inns and small guesthouses that charge the same fee year-round (see Chapter 3 for more details).

For generally lower hotel rates—your major expense on a Washington trip—plan to visit in summer, particularly mid-July through August, and in winter from Thanksgiving (late November) to the end of January. Unlike New York City, Washington doesn't get an influx of pre-holiday shoppers. Instead, business travel tapers off substantially—few big conventions are scheduled between Thanksgiving and New Year's Day—and hotel rates drop.

Weather-wise, neither summer nor winter is extreme, although both seasons can get uncomfortable for days at a stretch. July and August can get hot and sticky, and brief afternoon thunderstorms roar through, dousing the unprepared. My advice for summer visitors: Do the outdoor stuff (Lincoln, Jefferson memorials) in the morning, then duck into the air-conditioned museums in the afternoon. In winter, the city sometimes gets a heavy snowfall or two, but more often any flakes that fall are merely a light dusting. A few days may see bitter cold temperatures in the low teens, but it's unusual. A ski jacket, wool hat (that covers your ears) and gloves will keep you plenty warm. My advice for winter visitors: Head for the indoor attractions in the morning; save the outdoor memorials and monuments for the afternoon when the sun has warmed the day up a bit.

Washington's cultural scene never goes dark. Prime time is from fall into spring, when the National Symphony Orchestra and the Washington National Opera schedule performances. But so many visiting musical groups and entertainers pass through in the summer, nobody feels deprived. Anyway, summer is the time for lots of free entertainment on the Mall and elsewhere: Military band concerts on the Capitol steps; daily noon concerts (ranging from rock to country) at Woodrow Wilson Plaza (behind the Ronald Reagan Building, 14th Street and Constitution Avenue NW; Thurs noon pop concerts at Farragut Square).

A Temperate Climate

Monthly high and low average temperatures are as follows (Fahrenheit/Celsius):

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Temp °F (Max & Min)	44/30	46/29	54/36	66/46	76/56	83/65	87/69	85/68	79/61	68/50	57/39	46/32
Temp °C (Max & Min)	5/-1	8/-1	12/2	19/8	25/14	29/19	31/20	30/20	26/16	20/10	14/4	8/0

Cherry Blossoms: The Lowdown

Nature is unpredictable, and the Tidal Basin cherry blossoms do not always bloom on schedule. Often the 2-week festival, scheduled months in advance, takes place before the blossoms come into full bloom or after a freak windstorm has whipped the fragile blossoms away. Planning a cherry blossom trip too far in advance is an expensive gamble. Check the official website, www.nationalcherryblossomfestival.org, for predictions on peak blooming days.

WASHINGTON'S MAJOR ANNUAL EVENTS

The Washington event known around the world is the National Cherry Blossom Festival in late March and early April. But other major events fill the calendar throughout the year—as if your sightseeing agenda wasn't busy enough. And many of these events draw us locals to the Mall. It's your chance to see real Washingtonians rather than hordes of other fellow tourists. The Cherry Blossom Festival is the only event (other than the presidential inauguration, held every 4 years on Jan 20) that is such a big attraction that hotel prices shoot sky high, with hotels and guesthouses selling out.

Check the list that follows to see if you want your trip to coincide with a major annual event. Current dates and prices are provided on the website of the **Washington, D.C. Convention & Tourism Corporation** (www.washington.org). A schedule of the upcoming week's current events—a dizzying array of lectures, poetry readings, gallery openings, neighborhood street parties, gala soirees, free stuff, kids stuff, and more—is published every Thursday in the ***City Paper,*** a somewhat racy tabloid distributed free in street boxes throughout the downtown area. The ***Washington Post*** prints its own weekend-ahead list on Friday in the Weekend Section, a tabloid insert. It's sold (35¢) in newspaper boxes all over town. On the web, check the sites of the **D.C. Visitor Information Center** and the **Smithsonian Institution** (see above) for more upcoming events. The **White House Visitor Center** (also see above) distributes a brochure describing current National Park ranger tours on the Mall.

Washington Special Events

January

Washington, D.C. Restaurant Week. Making the best of post-holiday slack time, dozens of local restaurants—including some of the ritziest—offer three-course, prix-fixe lunch and dinner menus (soup/salad, entree, dessert) at just $20 for lunch, $30 for dinner. A list of participating eateries can be found at www.washington.org/restaurantwk.

Washington Auto Show. America's love affair with cars, and maybe everyone else's, is made manifest at this huge display of automotive design and technical wizardry held at the D.C. Convention Center, Pennsylvania Avenue NW at 9th Street. Thousands throng the aisles to view new auto models and manufacturers. The entrance fee is $10 for adults, $8 seniors, $5 children 6–12, 5 and under free.

For specific dates, go to www.washingtonautoshow.com.

February

George Washington's Birthday Celebration. The city itself is quiet on the first president's birthday, February 22. But Mount Vernon Estate, Washington's beautifully preserved home and gardens in the Virginia suburbs, celebrates it with appropriate pomp and ceremony. Anyone sharing a birthday with Washington (I happen to qualify) is admitted free. Others pay a fee. I profile Mount Vernon in Chapter 11 (p. 264). For information about the birthday program, contact ☎ 703/780-2000 or www.mountvernon.org.

March

St. Patrick's Day Parade. No, it doesn't rival New York's tribute to Ireland. But now, more than 35 years after its debut, the parade does take advantage of its Washington home to proclaim itself "The Nation's St. Patrick's Day Parade." Scheduled from noon to 3pm down Constitution Avenue NW between 7th and 17th streets (adjacent to the Mall), it features traditional parade hoopla: marching bands, pipe bands, military units, firefighters, floats, novelty groups, and a whole lot of Irish or Irish-wanna-bes bedecked in every shade of green imaginable. Get full details at www.dcstpatsparade.com.

March–April

National Cherry Blossom Festival. The 2-week festival, now more than 95 years old, commemorates the gift of 3,000 cherry trees given to the United States by the Mayor of Tokyo, Yukio Ozaki, in 1912. It draws more than 1 million visitors, filling the city's hotels and restaurants. A wide variety of cultural, sporting, and culinary events take place during the festival. But for residents and visitors alike, the big deal is circling the Tidal Basin on foot (3¼ miles) beneath a canopy of fragile pink blooms. Daily cultural performances are scheduled at noon at the Tidal Basin. A gala parade—huge floats, giant helium balloons, marching bands—begins on 10am on one Saturday along Constitution Avenue NW, adjacent to the Mall. Following at 11am is the Sakura Matsuri Japanese Street Festival, an all-day celebration of Japanese performances, events, crafts, and food—held downtown on Pennsylvania Avenue NW between 11th and 14th streets. And more: a rather photogenic kite-flying festival on the Mall; sushi and saki tasting; rugby, soccer, and lacrosse tournaments on the Mall; crew races on the Potomac River from Thompson's Boat Center, near the Kennedy Center; the 10-mile Cherry Blossom Run on the Mall. Most events are free to spectators. The festival's website, www.nationalcherryblossomfestival.org, maintains a "blossom watch" to inform you when the trees are at their peak beauty.

April

Filmfest DC—Washington International Film Festival. A 12-day festival, 2 decades old, it features more than 100 international movies, documentaries, short films, and special programs. For a schedule of performances, check www.filmfestdc.org.

Smithsonian Craft Show. The 4-day show, a quarter-century old, is considered the nation's most prestigious juried exhibition of contemporary crafts. On display are the works of 120 master craftsmen and women as well as those of emerging artists. Occupying the massive National Building Museum, it gathers a dazzling array of basketry, ceramics, decorative fiber, furniture, glass, jewelry, leather, metal, paper, wearable art, and wool, all of which are for sale. For more details, go to www.smithsoniancraftshow.org.

White House Easter Egg Roll. An annual tradition for more than 130 years (Rutherford B. Hayes initiated it), the giddy celebration draws thousands of youngsters and their parents from 8am to 2pm on Easter Monday. Held on the South Lawn of the White House, it's a lot more

than colored eggs. Often the president and first lady attend, for a little while anyway, to watch (and maybe take part in) face painting, the reading corners, art activities, magic shows, music, and, oh yes, egg coloring. Tickets (free) are required, and because of heavy demand, snagging them for you and your children is complicated. For additional information, refer to www.whitehouse.gov/easter.

May

National Memorial Day Parade. For 60 years until 2005, the city, filled as it is with military monuments and memorials, did not hold a commemorative parade. To remedy this failure, the World War II Veterans Committee put together a parade featuring 40 bands and 150 other units. The parade route begins at the foot of the U.S. Capitol and proceeds down Constitution Avenue to the White House. The website is www.wwiivets.com.

Capital Pride Festival. A multi-day festival, it is the fourth largest gay pride event in the United States. Primary events include a parade and street festival centered around Dupont Circle and nearby Pennsylvania Avenue NW. Other programs focus on diversity, cultural achievement, and civil rights issues involving gays, lesbians, bisexuals, transgender individuals, and their families and friends. Events are free. For a program schedule, visit the website at www.capitalpride.org.

June–July

National Capital Barbecue Battle. Who said bureaucrats can't have fun? Tens of thousands of barbecue fanciers (after all, Washington is just across the Potomac River from the South) turn out to watch barbecue whizzes from around the country and the world compete for prize money. Plenty of free samples means nobody goes hungry. Check the website at www.barbecuebattle.com for more information.

Smithsonian Folklife Festival. Since 1967, the Smithsonian Institution has brought an annual array of artists, musicians, crafts workers, dancers, and other talented folks from around the country and around the world to the grassy expanse of the Mall. So far, 54 foreign countries have been represented. In 2006, the Western Canada province of Alberta and Chicago's vibrant Latin community were highlighted. For several days leading up to the Fourth of July, you can take in music, dance, crafts and cooking demonstrations, storytelling, and more. It all takes place in a sprawling village of tents and is free. For this year's program, take a look at www.folklife.si.edu.

June

DC Caribbean Carnival. The city's Caribbean residents show their stuff in a colorful Extravaganza Parade of 21 masquerader bands and 5,000 costumed participants dancing and singing to the infectious tunes of the islands. It concludes at Bannecker Recreation Park, which is transformed into an international marketplace. For 2 days, the music throbs, dancers gyrate, and you can sniff the scent of island foods. Expect a crowd that numbers a half million. Check the website at www.dccaribbeancarnival.com for the dates.

July

Independence Day Celebration. Washington's massive show, as it should be, is televised nationally. Always on July 4, a 60-unit parade struts down Constitution Avenue NW (alongside the Mall) from 7th to 17th streets beginning at noon. In the late afternoon, popular music groups entertain on the Mall. At 8pm, big name entertainers headline a patriotic program leading up to a stupendous fireworks display. One of the country's great fireworks demonstrations, it draws half a million spectators, many of whom show up early in the day for a good view. Be prepared for massive crowds and a hot, sticky evening.

July–August

Legg Mason Tennis Classic. A men's-only tennis tournament that attracts such champions as Andy Roddick and Marat Safin. In all, 48 singles and 16 doubles teams compete. Find details at www.leggmasontennisclassic.com.

August

Washington, D.C. Restaurant Week. A repeat of the January prix-fixe menus stirs up business when Congress and high-spending lobbyists take their vacations. See January for details.

September

Black Family Reunion Celebration. Recognized as America's largest family event, the 2-day gathering celebrating African-American families draws a half-million attendees. Pavilions erected on the Mall focus on such themes as Health; Sports and Fitness; Education; Children; Fathers, Sons, and Brothers: Spirituality; and Family Values. On the lighter side, the program includes music, ethnic foods, and an arts and crafts marketplace. More details are provided on the website of the National Council of Negro Women, www.ncnw.org.

National Book Festival. A 1-day salute to the joy of reading, the Library of Congress-sponsored festival invites about 80 authors, illustrators, and poets to read and discuss their work—and maybe sign and sell a few copies of it. Personal note: I spent the day at the 2005 festival, where I said hello to a long-time colleague and acquaintance, travel writer Arthur Frommer, father of the creator/editor of this series. You also will have opportunities to hear and meet your favorite authors, who may or may not have literary daughters. Check the latest roster of participants at www.loc.gov/bookfest.

Reel Affirmations Film Festival. Though attendance is listed at about 30,000, this multiday event ranks as one of the largest gay and lesbian film festivals anywhere. Now more than 15 years old, it showcases some 60 films from around the world. A schedule and ticket charges are found at www.reelaffirmations.org.

Marine Corps Marathon. Run for more than 30 years, this legendary race threads a 26.2-mile course that begins near Arlington National Cemetery, navigates 19th-century Georgetown, tackles a portion of shady Rock Creek Park, circles the Mall past the Capitol and the Smithsonian museums, and concludes at the Iwo Jima Memorial. No wonder it's been nicknamed "the Marathon of the Monuments." In 2006, 34,000 participated. Celebrity TV host Oprah Winfrey completed the course in 1994. My editors at the *Washington Post* dispatched me to run with her part way. Even if you don't run, it's a great show. I go out most years to cheer the stragglers; they appreciate the encouragement. Race details are available at www.marinemarathon.com.

November–December

Washington Craft Show. Just in time for holiday shopping, the 3-day crafts fair presents the work of 185 contemporary American craftsmen and women and emerging artists. The place is the Washington Convention Center; the fee, $14. For more details, check www.craftsamericashows.com.

December

National Christmas Tree Lighting and Pageant of Peace. The president traditionally flips a switch to light the tree, and it twinkles throughout December in the Ellipse behind the White House. Each state, district, and territory is represented by a smaller tree standing side by side in

a giant loop. Nightly concerts serenade, and a giant bonfire adds more seasonal glow. The truth is, however, that the tree—displayed on worldwide television—is an unimpressive disappointment and is often garishly decorated to boot. I much prefer the tree that stands at the bottom of the west steps of the U.S. Capitol, which is much grander. And, of course, the tree in New York's Rockefeller Center, decorated the way a tree should be, outdazzles both of them. If you still want to go, check the website at www.pageantofpeace.org.

ENTRY REQUIREMENTS FOR NON-AMERICAN CITIZENS

Be sure to check with the U.S. embassy or consulate for the very latest in entry requirements, as these continue to shift since 9/11. Full information can be found at the U.S. State Department's website, www.travel.state.gov.

VISAS

As of this writing, citizens of western and central Europe, Australia, New Zealand, and Singapore need only a valid passport and a round-trip air ticket or cruise ticket to enter the U.S. Canadian citizens can also enter without a visa; you simply need to show proof of residence.

Citizens of all other countries will need to obtain a tourist visa from the U.S. consulate; depending on your country of origin, there may or may not be a charge attached (and you may or may not have to apply in person). To get the visa, along with a passport valid to at least 6 months from the end of your scheduled U.S. visit, you'll need to complete an application and submit a 1½-inch square photo. It's usually possible to obtain a visa within 24 hours, except during holiday periods or the summer rush.

For info about U.S. visas, go to http://travel.state.gov and click on "Visas."

PASSPORTS

To enter the United States, international visitors must have a valid passport that expires at least 6 months later than the scheduled end of your visit.

For Residents of Australia: You can pick up an application from your local post office or any branch of Passports Australia, but you must schedule an interview at the passport office to present your application materials. Call the Australian Passport Information Service at ☎ 131-232, or visit the government website at www.passports.gov.au.

For Residents of Canada: Passport applications are available at travel agencies throughout Canada or from the central Passport Office, Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, Ottawa, ON K1A 0G3 (☎ 800/567-6868; www.ppt.gc.ca). ***Note:*** Canadian children who travel must have their own passports. However, if you hold a valid Canadian passport, issued before December 11, 2001, that bears the name of your child, the passport remains valid for you and your child until it expires.

For Residents of Ireland: You can apply for a 10-year passport at the Passport Office, Setanta Centre, Molesworth Street, Dublin 2 (☎ 01/671-1633; www.irlgov.ie/iveagh). Those under age 18 and over 65 must apply for a 123€ 1-year passport. You can also apply at 1A South Mall, Cork (☎ 021/272-525) or at most main post offices.

For Residents of New Zealand: You can pick up a passport application at any New Zealand Passports Office or download it from their website. Contact the Passports Office at ☎ 0800/225-050 in New Zealand or 04/474-8100, or log on to www.passports.govt.nz.

For Residents of the United Kingdom: To pick up an application for a standard 10-year passport (5-yr. passport for children under 16), visit your nearest passport office, major post office, or travel agency, or contact the United Kingdom Passport Service at ☎ 0870/521-0410. Or search its website at www.ukpa.gov.uk.

MEDICAL REQUIREMENTS

No inoculations or vaccinations are required to enter the United States, unless you're arriving from an area that is suffering from an epidemic (cholera or yellow fever, in particular). A valid, signed prescription is required for those travelers in need of **syringe-administered medications** or medical treatment that involves **narcotics.** It is extremely important to obtain the correct documentation in these cases, as your medications could be confiscated, and if you are found to be carrying an illegal substance, you could be subject to significant penalties. Those who are **HIV-positive** may also require a special waiver in order to enter the country (as you will be asked on your visa application whether you're a carrier of any communicable diseases). The best thing to do is contact **AIDSinfo** (☎ 800/448-0440 or 301/519-6616; www.aidsinfonih.gov) for up-to-date information.

CUSTOMS REGULATIONS FOR INTERNATIONAL VISITORS

Strict regulations govern what can and can't be brought into the United States—and what you can take back home with you.

WHAT YOU CAN BRING INTO THE U.S.

Every visitor more than 21 years of age may bring in, free of duty, the following: (1) 1 liter of wine or hard liquor; (2) 200 cigarettes, 100 cigars (but not from Cuba), or 3 pounds of smoking tobacco; and (3) $100 worth of gifts. These exemptions are offered to travelers who spend at least 72 hours in the United States and who have not claimed them within the preceding 6 months. It is altogether forbidden to bring into the country foodstuffs (particularly fruit, cooked meats, and canned goods) and plants (vegetables, seeds, tropical plants, and the like). Foreign tourists may carry in or out up to $10,000 in U.S. or foreign currency with no formalities; larger sums must be declared to U.S. Customs on entering or leaving, which includes filing form CM 4790. For details regarding U.S. Customs and Border Protection, consult your nearest U.S. embassy or consulate, or U.S. Customs (☎ 202/927-1770; www.customs.ustreas.gov).

WHAT YOU CAN TAKE HOME FROM THE U.S.

For a clear summary of Canadian rules, write for the booklet "I Declare," issued by the **Canada Border Services Agency** (☎ 800/461-9999 in Canada, or 204/983-3500; www.cbsa-asfc.gc.ca).

For information, U.K. citizens contact **HM Customs & Excise** at ☎ 0845/010-9000 (from outside the U.K. at 44-2920-501-261), or the website at www.hmce.gov.uk.

A helpful brochure for Australians, available from Australian consulates or Customs offices, is "Know Before You Go." For more information, call the **Australian Customs Service** (☎ 1300/363-263, or log on to www.customs.gov.au).

Most questions regarding New Zealand rules are answered in a free pamphlet available at New Zealand consulates and Customs offices: "New Zealand Customs Guide for Travellers, Notice no. 4." For more information, contact **New Zealand Customs** (The Customhouse, 17–21 Whitmore St., Box 2218, Wellington; ☎ 04/473-6099 or 0800/428-786; www.customs.govt.nz).

FINDING A GOOD AIRFARE TO WASHINGTON, D.C.

Washington is served by three airports, all of which host one or more low-fare carriers. All three are busy airports, offering a wide choice of arrival and departure times. Using the tactics I describe below, you should be able to snag an affordable fare—maybe even a bargain.

One item to factor into your calculations when trying to find the cheapest fare is the cost of getting from the airport to downtown Washington, where you will presumably be staying.

The city's closest airport, handling only domestic flights and no wide-body planes, is **Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport (DCA).** Metrorail can get you into town from here in 10 to 15 minutes for a fare of $1.65 per person. Washington's two other airports are more distant, so fares into town are more expensive. However, both are served by public transportation—although the trip from both is time consuming. **Washington Dulles International Airport (IAD)** is located about an hour west of downtown in Virginia. **Baltimore-Washington International Thurgood Marshall Airport (BWI)** is 45 minutes north of downtown in Maryland. Supershuttle van service is $28 for the first person and $10 for each extra person in the same party. You'll see full information on getting to and from the airport below (p. 290). Keeping transportation costs in mind, your strategy for getting a reasonable fare should include these steps:

- **Look for a low fare carrier:** They tend to offer lower fares with fewer restrictions than the major carriers. Ronald Reagan Washington is served by **AirTran** (www.airtran.com), **ATA** (www.ata.com), **Spirit** (www.spiritair.com), **JetBlue** (www.jetblue.com), and **Frontier** (www.frontier). Washington Dulles gets **Southwest** (www.southwest.com), **AirTran, JetBlue,** and **Ted** (www.flyted.com). Baltimore-Washington is a destination for **Southwest, AirTran,** and **USA 3000** (www.usa3000.com). To locate the best fare, go to an aggregator website such as **FareCompare.com, Sidestep.com, Kayak.com,** or

Mobissimo.com. They search airfare sites for the best current fares, so you don't have to check out each airline individually nor do you have to pay a commission to an online travel agency. Southwest prohibits the display of its fares on any search site, so you will have to check them separately at the Southwest site (see above).

- **Fly when others don't, and take an itinerary business travelers don't want.** Take a mid-day, mid-week flight and stay overnight on a Saturday. Or fly overnight on a "red-eye." On these less popular flights, fares drop to attract more passengers.
- **Book in the wee hours.** You might save big bucks if you can stay awake until midnight when unpaid reservations are dropped from the airline's computer system. If it notes a sudden increase in availability, it may lower the fare for your flight. Also, Wednesday is a good day to book because that's when most airfare sales are released. Keep an eye on **Frommers.com** and **SmarterTravel.com,** which also feature fare sales.
- **Forget about air/hotel/car packages:** First, you don't need a car. Second, if you take the time to find a good air fare and book one of the budget or moderately priced hotels described in this guide (see Chapter 3), you are going to beat a hotel package. And third, booking independently, you can choose an alternative and (often) less expensive lodging, such as a bed and breakfast inn or rental apartment, rather than the tourist hotels that generally come as part of a package deal. On the other hand, if you don't have time to shop around, an air/hotel package may be a time and money saver for you if you plan to stay in a tourist hotel or motel anyway. But be sure to know where your accommodations are located before you purchase the package. Some of the least expensive packages I've seen feature lodgings miles from the city.
- **From abroad, try a consolidator fare:** Often called "bucket shops," consolidators or discount brokers buy tickets in bulk and pass the savings to their customers. If you are flying to Washington from outside the United States, a consolidator might be able to give you the best deal. In Europe, one way to find a consolidator that serves your area is to go to the website **www.CheapFlights.co.uk.** It acts as a clearinghouse for a variety of bucket shops, large and small. You also will see them advertised in metropolitan newspapers. But be aware of potentially outrageous fees if you want to change your ticket. Within the United States, consolidators can't match the fares of low-cost carriers. To quickly search standard airfares from abroad, **www.mobissimo.com** generally is the best search engine.

TRAVELING BEYOND WASHINGTON TO OTHER AMERICAN DESTINATIONS

Washington's three airports are served by all major airlines, linking you to every commercial airport in the country—that is, with a connection or two to its more remote corners.

For rail travelers the **USA Rail Pass,** offered by **Amtrak** (www.amtrak.com) is akin to Europe's Eurail pass and available only to people living outside the United States. Sorry, residents of Canada and Mexico are not eligible. The Amtrak website lists representative agents worldwide. The passes are sold for 5-day, 15-day,

and 30-day journeys and are to be used within a specific region (Northeast, East, or West). By paying more, you can get a pass covering the entire United States. The cheapest ($149) provides 5 days of travel during off-peak hours along the Northeast corridor. This is a good value if, for example, you want to go from Washington to New York with a 4-night stopover in Philadelphia. The most expensive ($550) provides 30 days of off-peak travel anywhere in the United States. If you are a big rail travel fan, you probably could complete a giant loop of the country—Washington west via the northern rail route and California east via the southern leg—in 30 days. Keep in mind that the United States operates a bare bones rail network, and you can't get to very much of anywhere outside the Northeast Corridor.

International visitors can also take advantage of a bus pass sold by **Greyhound/Trailways** (www.greyhound.com). Like the rail lines, the bus network has shrunk considerably in recent decades. But you can get more places off-the-beaten path by bus than by train. A bus pass costs about the same as a rail pass. As an aspiring journalist in search of a job years ago, I circled the country on a $99 Greyhound pass good for unlimited travel for 99 days. I had a great time, meeting all kinds of interesting people and seeing a large part of the country. But on-board conditions have changed. Seating is more cramped, bathrooms are smelly, and traffic tie-ups frequent and time-consuming. If the humble way is not your thing, go by plane or train. But if you want to meet Americans—a lot of them down on their luck, maybe—the bus would be the place to do it. And it's your chance to wander among remote prairie farm towns or into hidden Appalachian Mountain hollows.

Another bus option—if you want to explore the big East Coast cities—are the so-called **Chinatown shuttles.** Organized for ethnic Chinese needing cheaper transportation between Boston, New York, Philadelphia, and Washington, they are now a budget traveler boon. Expect to pay no more than about $20 to $25 from Washington to New York. About a dozen small bus lines are now plying the East Coast. Get route and fare information on a well-designed website called **Ivy Media** (www.ivymedia.com). If you want to contact the bus company directly—no cut in price—a major carrier between Washington, Philadelphia, and New York is **New Century Travel** (www.2000coach.com). Other lines include **Vamoose** (www.vamoosebus.com); **Washington Deluxe Bus Company** (www.washny.com); and **Dragon Coach** (www.gotobus.com). The catch? You may not be able to understand the Chinese-speaking driver with limited English. But the buses are usually clean, they're as swift as traffic allows, and you may get to see a Kung Fu movie, if the views along the Interstate pall. Keep in mind that driver training, supervision, and bus maintenance are not always up to the standards of Greyhound/Trailways. ***Note:*** After being on a Chinatown shuttle that reversed on the Jersey Turnpike after missing its exit, and on another whose nonfunctioning bathroom perfumed the bus with *eau de sewer,* and on yet another that failed an impromptu safety inspection by the NYPD, the editor of this book has sworn off this cheap, though admittedly dodgy, method of transport.

As I mentioned in chapter 2, unless you absolutely have to, don't drive in Washington, D.C. Save your wheels (and your patience) for making day trips from Washington. The interstate system is relatively easy to navigate, and destinations are usually well marked. If you need to rent a car while you're in the city,

wait until you're going to be making day trips, and consider planning them near your date of departure. Some of the national car-rental companies with offices in the Washington area include **Alamo** (☎ 800/462-5266; www.alamo.com), **Avis** (☎ 800/230-4898; www.avis.com), **Budget** (☎ 800/527-0700; www.budget.com), **Dollar** (☎ 800/800-3665; www.dollar.com), **Hertz** (☎ 800/654-3131; www.hertz.com), and **National** (☎ 800/227-7368; www.nationalcar.com).

To save money on rental cars, try the following strategies:

- **Bid for your car:** Companies such as **Priceline** (www.priceline.com) and **Hotwire** (www.hotwire.com) work only with the major car rental chains. So, bidding on a rental is really no more risky than going to a rental company direct, though you might get a Pontiac Grand Prix rather than a Chevrolet Monte Carlo. You never want to bid blind, though, because during heavy periods these "opaque" sites might not have better rates than the regular companies. To quickly survey the rental options, do a search on one of the following "aggregator" sites: BNM.com, Sidestep.com, or Mobissimo.com. Be aware, though, that reservations made through Priceline and Hotwire are **not cancellable.** You'll be asked to pay upfront, and you will lose your money if, for some reason, you end up not being able to use the car.
- **Use your VIP status:** If you're a member of AAA or AARP, make that known . . . after you get your quote. (Do it before and you might not get as good a deal.) If you work for a large corporation or are a member of a labor union, see if it has arranged benefits at the car rental counter. If you're going to be using a credit card, go to the site of the rental company you've picked first and see whether there are printable coupons there for credit card discounts. (Sorry, just using the credit card won't usually get you the discount; you have to hand in the darn coupon!) And if you shop at Sam's Club, Costco, or BJ's Wholesale, see whether they have any rental car coupons at their travel counters—often they do, and these can save you between 5% and 30%.
- **Check, check, and recheck:** If you book a car rental directly from a company, revisit its site before you get to the airport. Sometimes the prices drop. Simply rebook yourself at the lower rate (I've saved $60 this way) and bring a copy of your confirmation letter so that the counter-folks are clear on the cost.

SHOULD YOU BUY TRAVEL INSURANCE?

I recommend trip cancellation insurance only when you make a big, nonrefundable deposit for a trip—for a cruise, an escorted tour, a safari, or a week at an all-inclusive resort. This is money you don't want to lose if you are forced to cancel a trip—perhaps because of a last-minute accident or illness involving you or a family member or close friend. You don't need travel insurance for deposits you generally can recover—such as an airline ticket—or for refundable hotel deposits (provided you cancel prior to your scheduled arrival).

Consider **trip cancellation insurance** if your airline does not allow a schedule change or (for whatever reason) you are not going to book an alternative flight within the next year. You could **insure against the loss of valuables,** but why would you bring them along on vacation? Leave the dazzling diamond tiara at home. If you must bring valuables, know that the U.S. airlines pay only $2,800

or less for lost luggage on flights within the country; the payment on international flights is much less. However, your baggage may be covered by home-owner's insurance; check before buying additional insurance. Americans with health insurance generally do not need additional coverage for a trip to Washington. A few HMOs may be an exception, so check in advance of your trip. International visitors are urged to buy **medical insurance**—if they are not already covered for travel abroad. Unlike much of Europe, the United States does not provide any form of national health care. Doctor and hospital visits can be extremely expensive for the uninsured, and in nonemergency situations you will be expected to pay in advance or provide a credit card. In an emergency, you won't be turned away, but you are apt to get a stiff bill at check-out.

If you do decide to buy insurance, compare policies and coverage using the website **InsureMyTrip.com.** Or contact a travel agent or one of the following reputable companies:

- **Access America** (☎ 800/729-6021; www.accessamerica.com).
- **Travel Guard International** (☎ 800/826-4919; www.travelguard.com).
- **CSA Travel Protection** (☎ 800/873-9855; www.csatravelprotection.com).

GETTING FROM THE AIRPORT

As I noted above, Washington's close-in airport is Ronald Reagan Washington National—henceforth referred to (as all Washingtonians do) as National—is a breeze, however you do it. The other two are a bit more tricky. Here's my advice:

IF YOU LAND AT NATIONAL

Your best option is to take the train. The airport has its own **Metrorail** stop for the Blue and Yellow lines, both taking you into the heart of downtown. The one-way fare is a mere $1.65. (See Chapter 2, p. 11 for details on using the metro system.) You can connect easily to a line that serves your hotel, although you may have to pay a bit more if the hotel is outside the city center. The Yellow Line, which makes fewer stops, will get you into Washington a few minutes quicker than the Blue Line. Figure on a 10- to 15-minute ride.

A few hotels listed in Chapter 3 are located on a **Metrobus** route. As you pass through the entrance ticket gate at the Metrorail station, look for a small machine dispensing "transfers." They entitle you to a bus ride for 25¢. Savvy travelers know that using public transportation is more convenient if you pack lightly. The ride into town by taxi—lined up at the airport exit—costs about $15 to $20, plus a 15% to 20% tip. Except in morning rush hour, the trip from airport to hotel, a 5-mile ride, should take about 20 minutes.

IF YOU LAND AT WASHINGTON DULLES INTERNATIONAL

Dulles is 30 miles west of Washington. So expect to pay about $55 for a taxi and $75 for a private car service, plus a 15% to 20% tip. Ouch! On the plus side, the first dozen miles of the ride into Washington is on the Dulles Access Road. It is a four-lane divided freeway for airport traffic only. It feeds into I-66, an Interstate freeway that carries you swiftly into town. Travel time: About 30 to 35 minutes, except during the morning rush hour.

On a budget, you're going to want to use a cheaper way into town. A shared van service provided by **SuperShuttle** (☎ 800/258-3826; www.supershuttle.com) charges $22 between the airport and Washington hotels. The fare for each additional person in your party is $10. The trip will take longer if the van delivers other passengers to their hotels first.

The least convenient but cheapest way into town is via a combination of bus and Metrorail. At Dulles, board a bus operated by **Washington Flyer** (☎ 888/WASHFLY; www.washfly.com). Departures are every 30 minutes from 7:45am to 10:40pm. The bus takes you to the West Falls Church (Virginia) Metrorail station, a non-stop ride of about 20 minutes. The one-way cost is $9; round-trip is $16. There you catch the Orange Line into Washington, another 15 minutes. The Metrorail fare is an additional $1.85.

IF YOU LAND AT BALTIMORE-WASHINGTON INTERNATIONAL

This final airport is 31 miles north of Washington. So expect to pay about $60 for a taxi to your hotel, plus a 15% to 20% tip. **SuperShuttle** (☎ 800/258-3826; www.supershuttle.com) has not established a set fee, as at Dulles, but charges according to which ZIP code you are headed to. Expect to pay about $28 for a shared van and $10 for each additional person in your party. The ride will take at least 45 minutes, maybe more, thanks to the congested roads.

BWI is 1 mile from Amtrak's New York to Washington rail line; a free shuttle links it with the airport. Fares on the frequent **Amtrak trains** from the station into Washington's Union Station range from $17 to $36. On weekdays, the station is also served by the **MARC Penn Line,** a commuter line into Union Station. The fare is $6. Between the two lines, trains depart for Washington about once every hour daily; more often during rush hour periods.

As at Dulles, the least convenient but cheapest way into town is via a combination of bus and Metrorail. At BWI, board the **Greenbelt-BWI Airport Express Line** [B30] (☎ 202/637-7000; www.wmata.com/timetables/md/B30.pdf). It will take you nonstop to the Metrorail's Green Line station at Greenbelt, Maryland. The bus fare is $3; the Metrorail fare into Washington is another $2.35. Buses operate about every 40 minutes from 7am to 10:45pm, with slightly fewer trips on Saturdays and Sundays. Check the schedule on the website above. Count on an hour to make the trip.

WHAT TO WEAR

Because this guide advocates touring Washington on foot—well, mostly—make sure you bring a sturdy pair of walking shoes—water resistant if possible for rain and snow. You will need them outside on the hot sidewalk pavement and inside on cool marble floors—literally miles of marble floors—and countless stairways. If you are in the city for pleasure, pack casual wear. Some ritzy (read "expensive") restaurants require men to wear jackets, but I know of none (certainly not in this guide) that demand ties.

But you don't want to dress down too much—particularly if you hope to mix and mingle with the city's young professionals. Washington is populated by folks who came to the city to get ahead. They dress for it. If you want to fit in, so

should you. Instead of cut-off shorts and tank tops, think, instead, in terms of casual chic, especially after business hours.

In summer, sandals, shorts, and tees are the accepted costume for sightseeing on the Mall; wear anything heavier, and you will melt into a puddle of sticky perspiration. An exception would be if you have a private White House tour or a staff tour of the U.S. Capitol; dress a little spiffier, or you may feel embarrassed seeing all the neatly attired suits zipping by you in the corridors. In spring and fall, tote along a jacket and a warm sweater. In winter, pack a ski-type parka, hat that covers your ears, warm gloves, and a scarf. And don't forget an umbrella; you could need it any day of the year.

MONEY MATTERS

Years ago, I toted a small wad of traveler's checks when I traveled. I don't do it anymore, and neither should you. Nowadays the best way to get spending money is from an **Automatic Teller Machine (ATM).** In downtown Washington, there's a bank with an ATM on nearly every other corner. Foreign visitors should note that ATMs give much better conversion rates, even when fees are charged, than you'll find at banks and other facilities that change money. You'll also find ATMs in drug stores, grocery stores, and entertainment venues, but their transaction fees are generally higher than those in banks. For hotel bills, dining, bar-hopping, theater and concert tickets, and other major purchases use a **credit card.** American Express, Discover, MasterCard, and Visa are widely accepted.

Traveler's checks are still sold and accepted in the United States. But expect to be asked for identification and sometimes, a look of confusion, as traveler's checks are no longer widely used. If you don't have an ATM card, then bring traveler's checks or better yet, a traveler's check card, which can be easily replaced if lost; it allows you to put a set amount down for your vacation and is used just like a credit card. You can exchange traveler's checks and cash for U.S. dollars at **Travelex Currency Services** (www.travelex.com), a reputable firm that has offices in each of Washington's airports, at Union Station (Amtrak), and at three other downtown locations. You will pay for this service, and expect to show your passport. The three downtown offices are located at 1800 K St. NW; 825 14th St. NW; and 701 15th St. NW. Exchange fees are generally higher at airports; use these services only for convenience.

TIPPING AND TAXES

When budgeting for your trip, don't forget to factor in **Washington's taxes.** Total hotel tax including the sales tax is 14.5%. The tax on all prepared food and beverages is 10%. No tax is imposed on edible groceries. The sales tax on goods and services is 5.75%.

But the city's suburban neighbors charge different rates. In **Maryland,** the hotel tax varies by county, averaging 5% to 8%. The sales tax is 5%. Keep this in mind if you are shopping at Friendship Heights in Northwest Washington, a major complex of department stores and boutiques. Western Avenue, the D.C.-Maryland state line, slices through its heart. The tax situation changes when you cross Western from a Washington shop to a store in Maryland.

In **Virginia,** just across the Potomac River bridges, the hotel tax varies according to the jurisdiction, averaging 9.5% to 10%. The sales tax is 5%.

What Will Your Vacation Cost?

To Americans from elsewhere in the country, Washington is one of the country's most expensive cities for goods and services. On the other hand, if you arrive from London or Tokyo (recently ranked as the first and second most expensive cities in the world) you may think it's a bargain. To give you an idea of what to expect, I've made a list of items you might purchase. If the prices seem high to you, bring what you can from home. If they seem low, stock up after you arrive.

Metro (subway) or bus ride	$1.35
Taxi ride, downtown	$6.50 for one, $8.00 for two
Tube of toothpaste (medium, 4.2 oz.)	$2.70
Box of Tampax (quantity of 20)	$3.70
Package of diapers (quantity of 40)	$12.00
Contact lens solution (½ oz.)	$4.30
Bran muffin	$1.50
Cup of coffee	$1.50 (more for lattes and the like)
Cup of tea	$1.35
Sandwich in a deli	$3.00–$6.50
Hot dog on the Mall	$1.20–$4.75
Sit-down lunch on the Mall	$5.00–$10.00
Restaurant dinner (moderate)	$7.00–$12.00 per person (budget); $15.00–$25.00
Draft beer in a neighborhood bar	$3.50–$7.00
Cocktail in a neighborhood bar	$6.00–$12.00
Bottle of water (20 ounces)	$1.00–$1.50
Museum entrance fee	Free for most; $5.00–$14.00 for others
Theater ticket	$40.00
Movie ticket	$9.50
Walking tour	$10.00
Souvenir T-shirt	$3.00–$6.00 from street vendors; $14.00–$16.00 in museum shops

Tips are expected in the entire metro area. Give waiters 15% to 20% of the cost of the meal, depending on the quality of service. Bellhops should get $1 per bag. Leave $1 to $2 a day for hotel housekeepers. My practice is to leave the tip daily on my pillow so that I know the housekeeper who is servicing my room gets it. Tip taxi drivers 15% to 20%.

IS IT SAFE?

Explore the attractions outlined in this guide during daylight hours with an easy mind. Dine out, attend the theater, take in a sporting event, and ride the Metro in the evening similarly at ease—but use common sense. The nightlife areas generally are thronged until midnight or so, so stick to the busy well-lighted streets. (There's safety in numbers.) If your hotel is a long, dark walk from a Metro station, take a taxi back when you're out late. Although the Metro is generally considered safe, get into a car that has other riders. Infrequent Metro incidents typically occur late at night at outlying stations.

Generally, it's prudent to avoid neighborhoods across the Anacostia River in northeast and southeast Washington, especially at night. Trouble also erupts with some frequency in such prime nightlife areas as Adams Morgan (18th Street and Columbia Road NW) and the U Street Corridor (14th and U sts. NW). Georgetown is normally quite safe. Nearly every incident there occurs after the bars empty out. Don't walk alone between the monuments and memorials on the Mall; as I write this, the news is filled with accounts of nighttime muggings on the Mall. And be cautious after dark on the side streets of Capitol Hill.

After all this, keep in mind that Washington is a large city with all types of people. Be vigilant. Though I'm unaware of a pickpocket ring operating in the city, never carry large amounts of money with you. Don't stow your wallet in a back pocket where it can be filched. Keep your passport and other valuables in the hotel safe. (If you are traveling with a passport, make a copy of it so that you have the essential information needed for a replacement.) Women should keep purses in sight at all times, or better yet, not carry a purse. (They can be an inconvenience at museum security checks.)

You will probably be approached by panhandlers soliciting money. Some are regulars at certain street corners. These unfortunate street people pose no danger. Give them a coin or two if you feel generous, but remember that public and private agencies do provide free food; your money may feed a drug or alcohol habit. My practice is to contribute instead to local organizations serving the homeless.

WHAT IF I GET SICK?

If you think you need a doctor or dentist while in Washington, check with the desk staff at your hotel. They may have an arrangement with a medical practitioner to see guests on an emergency basis. Doctors almost never make "house" calls. Office hours vary, but weekdays from 9am to 5pm is fairly standard. Another option, especially if you are in pain and can't wait for an appointment, is to go to a hospital emergency room. Your hotel can direct you to the one nearest your hotel. In an emergency, dial **911** for an ambulance. You can use this number anywhere in the United States to reach the police, fire department, and ambulance dispatcher.

If you bring prescription medications into the country, make sure you pack them in their original container in your carry-on bag. Bring a copy of the prescription if you run out of or somehow lose your medication. **CVS Pharmacy** operates three branches with 24-hour pharmacies: 6 Dupont Circle NW, near 20th and P sts. (☎ 202/785-1466; Metro: Dupont Circle); 2240 M St. NW, at 22nd and M sts. (☎ 202/296-9876; Metro: Foggy Bottom); and 4555 Wisconsin Ave. NW at Albemarle Street (☎ 202/537-1587; Metro: Tenleytown).

STAYING WIRED WHILE YOU'RE AWAY

Most (but not all) of the lodgings listed in the Accommodations chapter provide a free link to the Internet, usually wireless. At smaller properties, especially those listed under the "Alternative" heading, access may be in the lobby only and not in individual rooms. Ask in advance if this is important to you. Some of the larger hotels will charge a fee, usually $9.95/day, for internet access.

Branches of the Washington Public Library are scattered throughout the city, and all offer free Internet service. Each branch has at least one computer and most have four. The main branch, the **Martin Luther King Memorial Library** (Penn Quarter; 901 G St. NW; ☎ 202/727-1111; www.dclibrary.org; Mon–Thurs 9:30am–9pm; Fri–Sat 9:30am–5:30pm; Metro: Gallery Place/Chinatown), has 40. Check the website for location of other branches.

Dupont Circle is a free wireless hot spot—grab a park bench. Numerous coffee shops and cafes also provide free wireless Internet (Wi-Fi) points in Washington. Current lists are provided at www.auscillate.com/wireless/Washington and www.wififreespot.com/dc.html. Tryst Coffeehouse Bar & Lounge (p. 259) in Adams Morgan is a cozy place to catch up on e-mail. The many Starbucks coffee outlets provide Internet access for a fee (through T-Mobile).

TRAVELERS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

FAMILY TRAVELERS

Washington is a family-friendly city with lots of special activities designed just for family groups and youngsters. I detail many of these programs on p. 133.

Although the city's Downtown area, including the Mall, is lacking in playground equipment, there are plenty of parks and other open spaces for the kids to work off excess energy when museum-going palls. A good, well-equipped playground is located in Georgetown in **Rose Park** at 27th and N streets NW. (It's on the Georgetown Walkabout, outlined in Chapter 8, p. 191). The **Carousel on the Mall** (near the Castle) is always a big hit with young visitors.

Most restaurants listed in this guide (see Chapter 4, p. 54) cater to families, but if you need a high chair or want a kid's menu, then call ahead. Those places that don't provide them probably prefer that you bring only older children.

With younger kids especially, it's wise to stay in a Downtown hotel close to the Mall, so you can easily take a refresher break when the toddler is ready for a nap. Most hotels allow a family of four to share a room at no extra cost; some set an age limit. But a free stay for the young is not generally the case at guesthouses and bed and breakfast inns, many of which discourage young children. Ask your hotel (before you arrive; reservations are needed) if baby sitters are available; they're expensive, but you may want a night on your own. Typically, larger hotels maintain a list of on-call baby sitters, but you may have to sign a waiver exempting the hotel from liability if a problem occurs.

Children age 4 and under ride free on the Metrorail and Metrobus system. But this freebie is limited to only two children per parent.

TRAVELERS WITH DISABILITIES

Washington's tourism promoters claim that Washington is one of the world's most accessible cities for physically-challenged visitors, in part perhaps because this is the city where Congress created the Americans with Disabilities Act. I'd say they're on the mark: all of the city's major tourist attractions are fully accessible, as are most transportation options, restaurants, and hotels.

The premier source for disability-related information in the Metropolitan area is the **Washington, DC Access Guide.** It provides first-hand accessibility reviews of hotels, restaurants, movies, attractions, shopping malls, recreational facilities, and more. You can order a free copy at ☎ 301/528-8664 or www.disabilityguide.org or read the reviews online.

Hotels: Accessibility varies in the lodgings I've described in Chapter 3. Be aware that small guesthouses, bed-and-breakfast inns, and some budget hotels may not have elevators. Some have entrance stairways with no ramp. Be sure to ask about facilities before booking rooms. Larger and newer hotels—that is, the more expensive ones unfortunately—are accessible. The website www.disability.org lists Washington's most accessible lodgings.

Restaurants: They vary widely in accessibility. Many are too small for wheelchairs. Some have upstairs or downstairs seating, and the bathrooms may be on a different floor. If you are a wheelchair user or have mobility impairments, call in advance to make sure the restaurant can accommodate you. The website www.disability.org lists Washington's most accessible places to eat.

Transportation: Public transportation in Washington is fully accessible. All buses are equipped with either low floor ramps or lifts for wheelchairs, and there are designated areas on board for wheelchairs. As buses are retired, new ones are equipped with audio devices that announce each upcoming stop for the sight impaired. All Metrorail stations are equipped with elevators, and audio devices announce the next stop. Extra-wide fare gates for wheel chairs are located in every station. Rubber bumps along the rail platform warn the blind or hard of seeing that they are near the platform's edge. To learn more, order a free copy of the **Metro System Guide** for the elderly and physically disabled at ☎ 202/637-7000 or www.wmata.com. Taxis will pick up wheelchair passengers who can maneuver into a taxi seat; the collapsed wheelchair goes in the trunk. Disabled passengers are entitled to a half-price fare discount on Metrorail and Metrobus. Check Chapter 2 "Getting Around in the City" for details.

Those wishing to rent their own set of wheels are advised to contact **Avis Rent a Car** to take advantage of its "Avis Access" program (☎ 888/879-4273), which offers customized cars and vans with such features as swivel seats, spinner knobs, hand controls, and accessible bus service.

Theaters: The city's major theaters are accessible. Three theaters—**The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts** (p. 248), **The Arena Stage** (p. 244), and **The National Theater** (p. 247)—are particularly so, offering free headphones to the hearing impaired, TTY phones, Braille programs, special performances with sign language interpreters, and more. The National offers half-price tickets on a limited basis to persons with disabilities. For full information on any of these theaters, go to their individual websites. Accessibility varies at the small theaters, so check ahead before you book.

Museums: The city's museums are also generally very accessible. The **Smithsonian Access Brochure** is a free guide that provides an overview of accessibility features at the Smithsonian Institution's museums. It is available on audiocassette, in Braille, or on compact disc. For a free copy, call ☎ 202/357-2700 (voice) or 202/357-1729 (TTY). The website is www.si.edu. Copies also can be picked up at museum information desks. The monuments and memorials on the Mall are all accessible. The situation at historic house museums varies.

GAY AND LESBIAN TRAVELERS

You will find plenty of company in Washington, which is gay- and lesbian-friendly territory with a large and politically active population. Traditionally, the GLBT community has been centered around Dupont Circle. That's where you will find a wide choice of gay bars and clubs. But the U Street Corridor is a developing area. Two free weekly publications distributed widely in downtown Washington highlight bars, clubs, restaurants, and events catering to the gay community. ***Metro Week*** is purely an entertainment magazine; the ***Washington Blade*** is a serious tabloid newspaper.

SENIOR CITIZENS

As a senior (usually over 60–65), you are entitled to numerous discounts, so ask. At hotels, belonging to **AARP** (601 E St. NW, Washington, D.C. 24009; ☎ 888/687-2277; www.aarp.org) can save you 10% on your bill. Most museums that charge a fee offer a senior rate. All movie theaters and most live performance theaters discount tickets of at least a buck or two. Seniors are entitled to a half-price fare on Metrorail and Metrobus. (See p. 12 for more on that.) Many downtown restaurants offer pretheater menus at a reduced price, available to all patrons, no matter what age. Otherwise, you won't find early-bird specials. Pauline Frommer, editor of this guidebook series, notes that restaurants tend to serve heaping portions. Pauline's father, Arthur Frommer (now himself over 70), told her that he has found that with age comes a diminishment in appetite. His advice to seniors: Share food. One appetizer and one entree is what Arthur and his wife order when they dine out, and he says they leave perfectly satisfied.

WASHINGTON BOOKS FOR THE WELL-PREPARED VISITOR

The books I've selected tell you not so much about Washington—I've covered that territory in this guide—but how the nation's capital works. Behind those imposing marble facades that house the government, wheeling and dealing—the game of politics—keep the ship of state on a more or less steady course. These books reveal how it's done.

- ***Advise and Consent,*** the 1959 novel by journalist Allen Drury, depicts the U.S. Senate in action, warts and all. Some political observers regard it as the best novel ever written about the workings of the U.S. government.
- ***Master of the Senate,*** Robert A. Caro's Pulitzer Prize–winning biography (2002) of Lyndon B. Johnson, is an insider's guide to how the U.S. Senate—and political Washington—work. It is a masterful book, daunting in size but full of revelations, both significant and gossipy.

- ***All the President's Men*** by *Washington Post* reporters Carl Bernstein and Bob Woodward is the quintessential story of investigative journalism and its role in the fall of Richard Nixon. I was an editor at *The Post* when the team's Watergate stories were a must read around the world. The book that followed recreates those exciting, troubled days.
- ***Lincoln,*** the Pulitzer Prize–winning biography by David Herbert Donald (1995) is a captivating account of how the president guided the Union through the Civil War. As such, it focuses on Washington during the crisis. Consider it also a primer to Washington place names. Much of the city's statuary, and many of its circles and squares are named for Civil War military figures.
- **Any of the 14 mystery novels** by George Pelecanos, set in the city's crime-troubled eastern precincts. They illuminate the hidden corners of the capital.
- ***Lost in the City*** by Edward P. Jones, the Pulitzer Prize–winning author's collection of stories set in Washington's predominantly African-American neighborhoods. They provide a sympathetic look at how the city's black residents live ordinary lives in a hurtful world.
- ***AIA Guide to the Architecture of Washington, D.C.*** by Christopher Weeks is an informative—and highly opinionated—architectural assessment of the city's major buildings and a short architectural history of the city.
- ***The Outdoor Sculpture of Washington: A Comprehensive Historical Guide*** by James M. Goode is a fascinating look at the stories behind the city's wealth of commemorative and decorative statuary.

Washington's ABCs

Area Code Washington has one area code, 202. If you are calling the city from anywhere outside the District of Columbia you have to begin with this number. In the United States, all long distance calls begin with the prefix 1. For example, a call from New York City begins, 1-202, followed by a seven-digit number. Calls that begin with 800, 877 and 888 are free, no matter where you are calling. Of course, they must be preceded by 1 also.

Business Hours Most offices are open Monday through Friday 9am to 5pm. Many banks are open Monday through Friday 9am to 3pm. But increasingly they are staying open until 5pm and keeping 9am to noon hours on Saturday and Sunday. Shops generally open at 10am, and those located in large malls may remain open until 9pm. Some grocery stores open as early as 6am and don't close until 9pm.

Closings Banks, federal offices, and post offices close on the following holidays: January 1 (New Years Day); the third Monday in January (Martin Luther King Day); the third Monday in February (Presidents Day); the last Monday in May (Memorial Day); July 4 (Independence Day); the first Monday in September (Labor Day); the second Monday in October (Columbus Day); November 10 (Veterans Day); the fourth Thursday in November (Thanksgiving Day); and December 25 (Christmas). Most museums, including the Smithsonian, remain open except for December 25 and January 1. The monuments and memorials on the Mall never close.

Drinking Laws The legal age for the purchase and consumption of any sort of alcohol is 21, and proof of age is likely to be requested at liquor stores, bars, clubs,

and restaurants. If you look anywhere near 21, be sure to carry photo identification. It is illegal to carry open containers of alcohol in any public area where alcohol is not specifically permitted. You can be ticketed. Bars close at 2am except Friday and Saturday nights, when you can keep downing those drinks until 3am.

Electricity The United States uses 110–120 volts AC (60 cycles), compared to 220–240 volts AC (50 cycles), the standard in Europe, Australia, and New Zealand. Adaptors to use with appliances from these nations are difficult to find in the United States and should be brought with you when arriving from outside the United States.

Emergencies Telephone ☎ 911 for police, fire, or ambulance. If you have a medical emergency that does not require an ambulance, you should be able to get to the nearest hospital emergency room on your own.

Hospitals The following Washington hospitals are well regarded and maintain emergency rooms that are open 24 hours. All are located in upscale neighborhoods where the clientele is apt to demand, and get prompt, top-notch medical care.

Georgetown University Hospital (3800 Reservoir Rd. NW; ☎ 202/444-2000).

George Washington University Hospital (900 23rd St. NW; ☎ 202/715-4000). Located at Washington Circle, GWU Hospital is the most convenient to downtown hotels, but the emergency room may also be the busiest.

Sibley Memorial Hospital (5255 Loughboro Rd. NW; ☎ 202/537-4000). Because of its semisuburban location, its emergency room may be less harried and so able to get to you sooner.

Libraries Branches of the Washington Public Library are scattered throughout the city and all offer free Internet service. The Martin Luther King Memorial Library, the main branch, is located downtown at 901 G St. NW. The library building was designed in 1972 by famed architect Mies van der Rohe. As was his style, it is a glass box—his only work in Washington. As I write this, controversy rages. Should it be torn down as outmoded and replaced by a new structure in a huge vacant lot nearby? Or should it be remodeled, preserving the architect's vision but updating facilities? No side in the dispute has the upper hand yet. The library (☎ 202/727-1111; www.dclibrary.org) is open Monday to Thursday from 9:30am to 9pm and Friday and Saturday 9:30am to 5:30pm. It is closed Sunday. Check the website for location of other branches.

Newspapers and Magazines Washington has one major newspaper, **the *Washington Post,*** and two lagging challengers, **the *Washington Times*** and the ***D.C. Examiner*.** The *Post* and the *Times,* a publication of the Rev. Moon organization, are full-size daily newspapers for which you must pay. The *Post* is considered liberal in its editorial opinions; the *Times* is the conservative one. The *D.C. Examiner,* a tabloid, is distributed for free downtown on weekdays in boxes near metro exits. The *Post* also distributes a free newspaper weekdays called the ***Express*.** You can do nicely with the free papers; no need to spend your money for one. The *Express,* condensing items from the illustrious *Post,* is the thoughtful tabloid. It is thicker and livelier and more fun to read. The ***City Paper,*** a weekly tabloid distributed widely throughout the city on Thursday, covers the nitty gritty of Washington and is a good source of information for arts and entertainment information.

Pharmacies See p. 294 for my listing of 24-hour pharmacies.

Restrooms Every Smithsonian museum on the Mall has one or more restrooms as do all of the other museums in town, all of the historic houses, and many of the larger memorials. Look for them also in coffee shops, such as Starbucks; in the lobby of large convention hotels; in food courts; at Union Station; in Cabinet-level office buildings (yes, you can enter); and in big chain bookstores.

Smoking As of January 1, 2007, District of Columbia law bans smoking in most indoor public spaces, including offices, apartment building lobbies, restaurants, taverns, nightclubs, and bars. Exemptions include outdoor areas of bars and restaurants, cigar bars, and hotel rooms. Many hotels in my accommodations list ban smoking on the premises.

Taxes See the "Money Matters" section, p. 292.

Time The continental United States is divided into four time zones: Eastern Standard Time (EST), Central Standard Time (CST), Mountain Standard Time (MST), and Pacific Standard Time (PST). Washington is on Eastern Standard Time, which is the earliest of the time zones. When it's noon in Washington, it's 11am in Chicago (CST), 10am in Denver (MST), and 9am in Los Angeles (PST). Beginning in 2007, the period during which Daylight Savings Time is in effect has been extended. In most (but not all) parts of the country, clocks are set forward one hour from the second Sunday in March to the first Sunday in November.

Tipping See p. 292.

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